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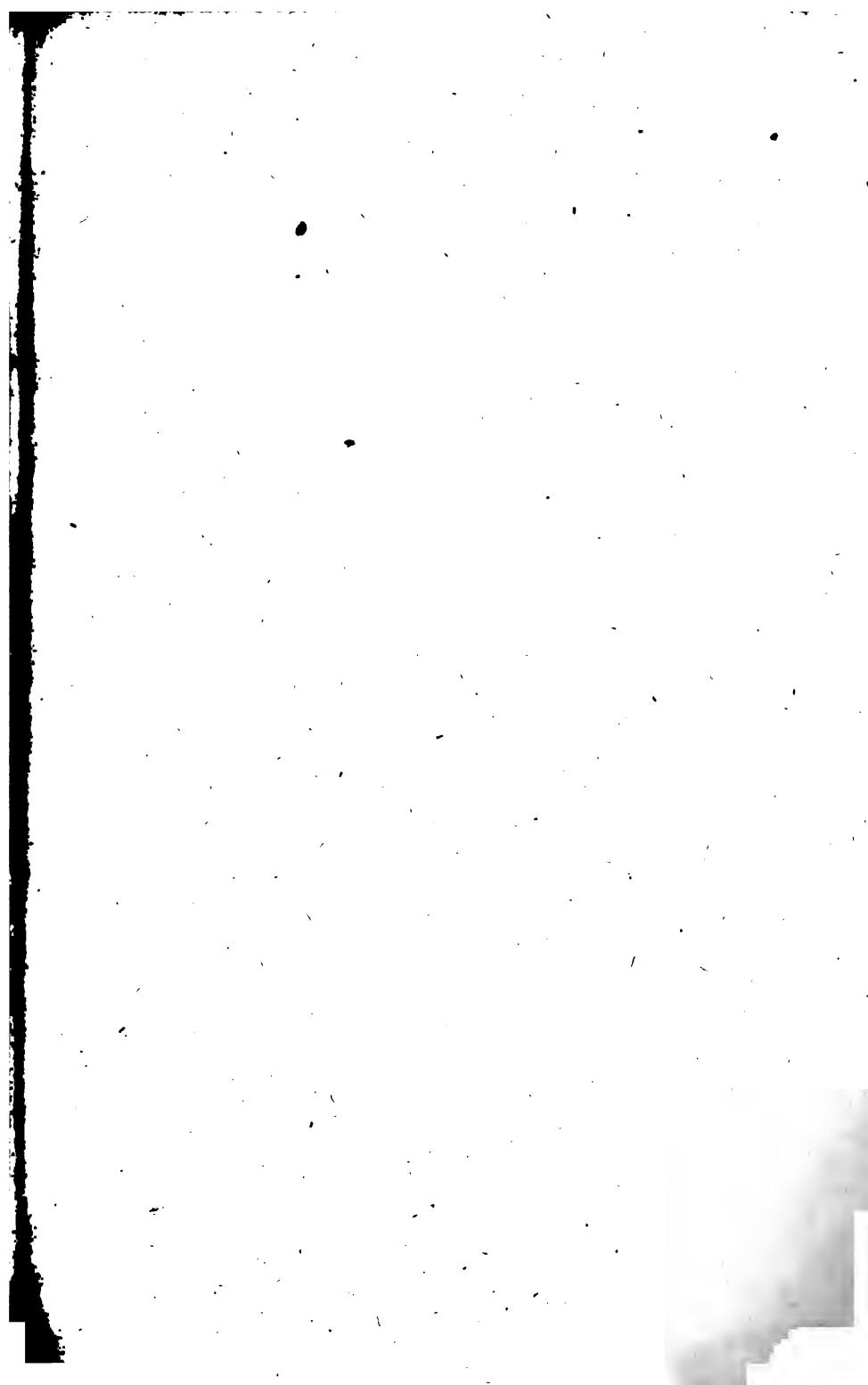
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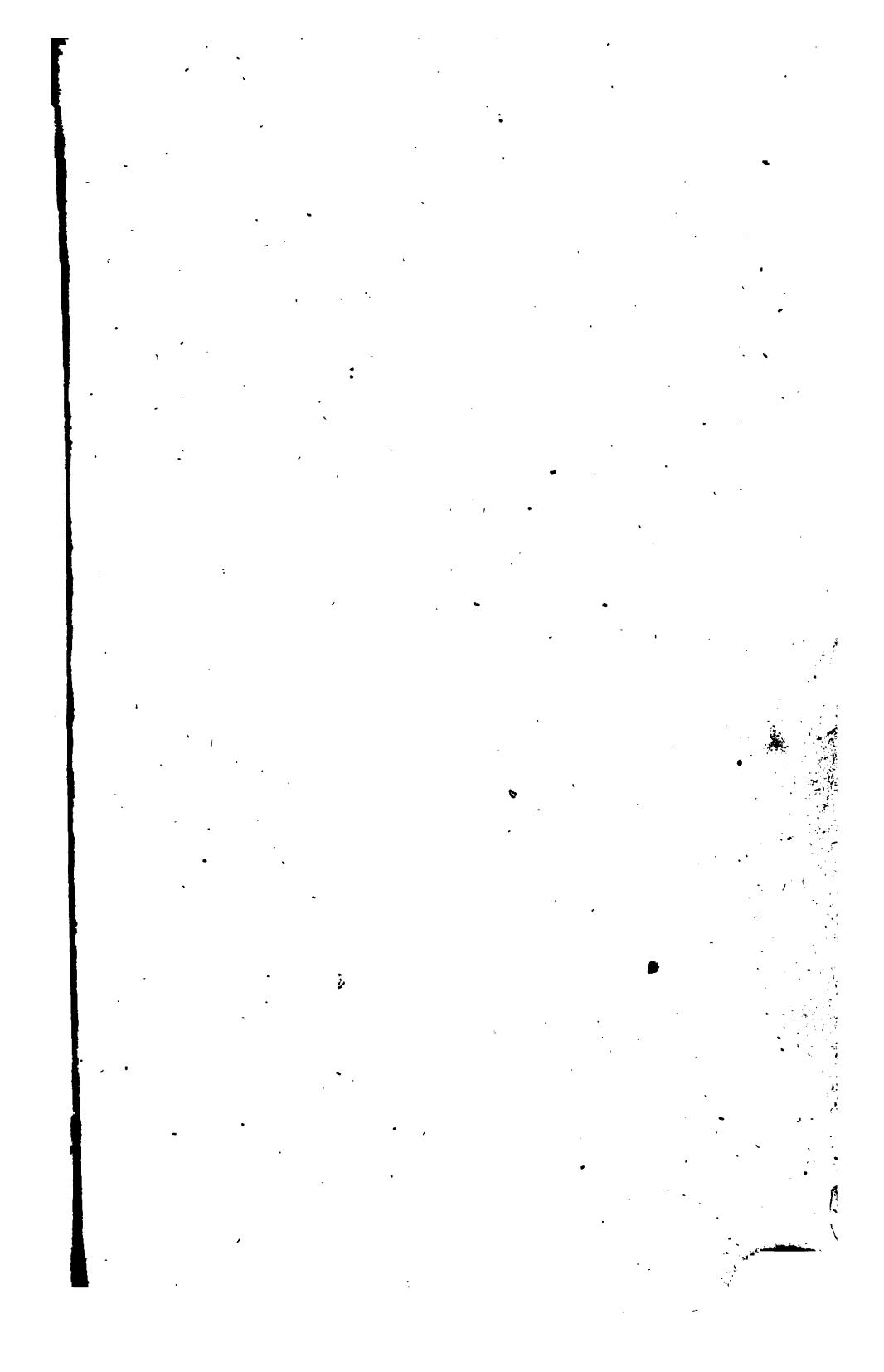


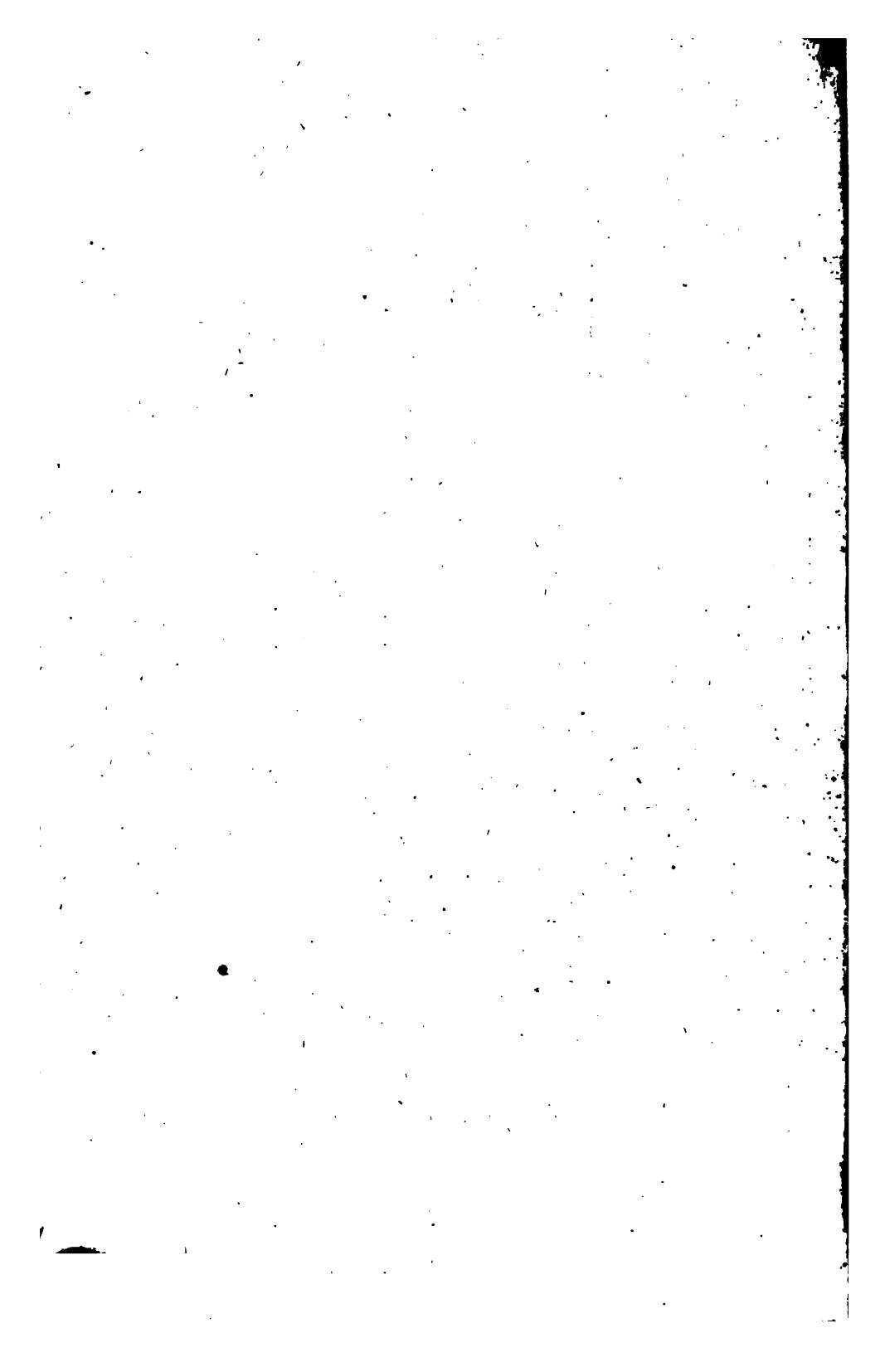
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THE
ELEMENTS
OF
DRAMATIC CRITICISM.

CONTAINING

An *Analysis* of the STAGE under the following Heads,
TRAGEDY, { PANTOMIME,
TRAGI-COMEDY, } and
COMEDY, } FARCE.

With a SKETCH of the EDUCATION
Of the GREEK and ROMAN ACTORS;
Concluding with
Some GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS
For succeeding
In the ART of ACTING.

By WILLIAM COOKE, Esq;
Of the Middle Temple.

Singula quaque locum teneat sortita decentem.

Hor. de Art. Poet.



L O N D O N :

Printed for G. KEARSLY, in Fleet-street; and G. ROBINSON,
in Pater-noster-row. 1775.



TO

DAVID GARRICK, Esq;

Sir,

AS every subject which leads to the further elucidation of the drama, necessarily claims the protection of its ablest *practical commentator*, I shall make no apology for inscribing this book to you.

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It

DEDICATION.

It would be a tiresome truth, to detain you here with a repetition of those praises, which your abilities have demanded from the public; abstracted from this, I am satisfied I could derive no credit, as a writer, from the attempt; every avenue to novelty on this subject being so justly anticipated. Thus narrowed in the walk of a dedicatory---I have only to offer you my *admiration*, which, though you have long since had it from me in the shout of the public, permit me, to repeat it more par-

DEDICATION.

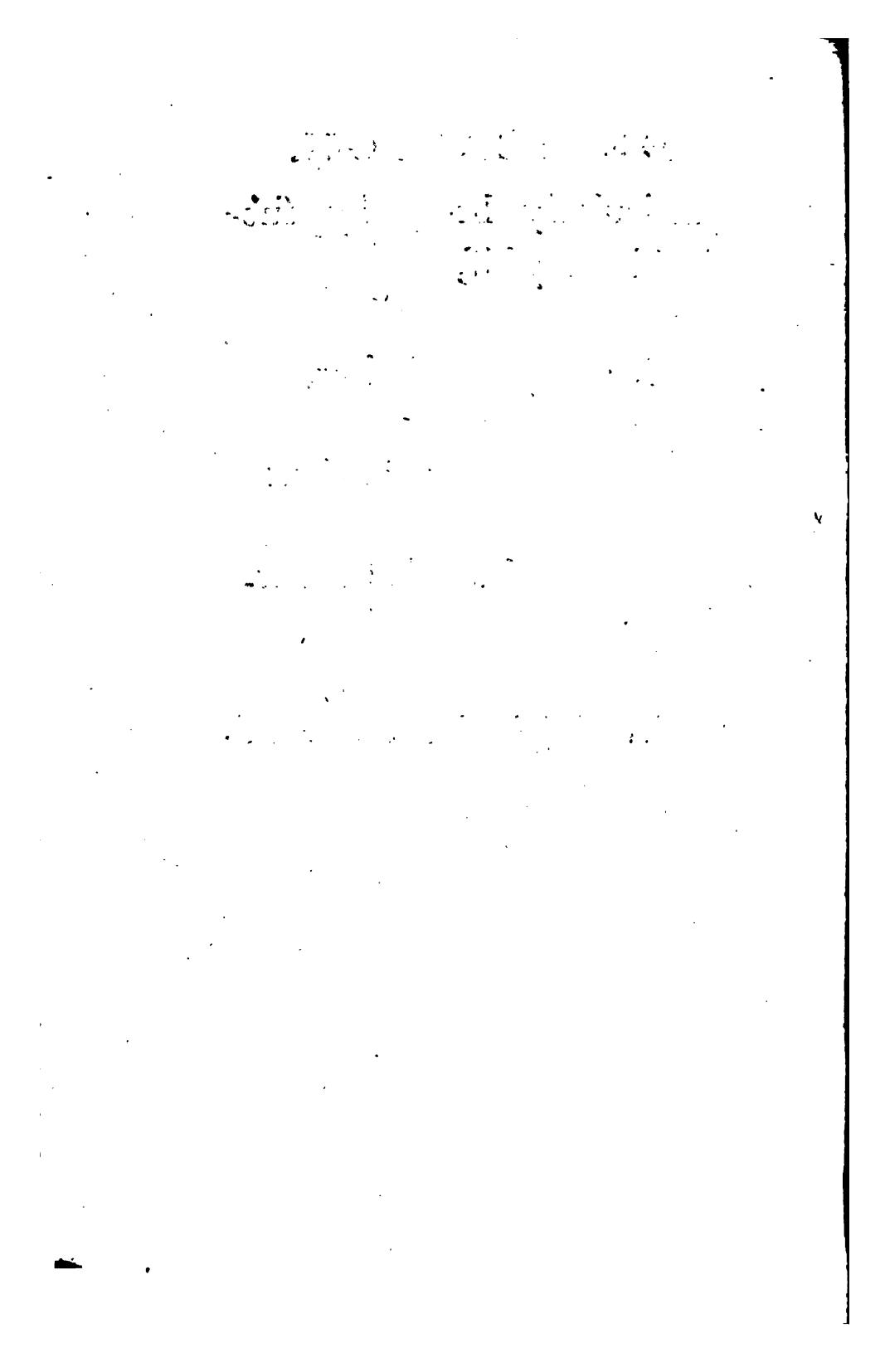
particularly here, by sub-
scribing myself,

Much your admirer,

and most obedient

humble servant,

WILLIAM COOKE.





INTRODUCTION.

IN an age, when, with every species of polite literature, the elements of the drama seem to be so universally understood, any additional elucidation on the subject may appear vague, and unnecessary. Dramatic writing, together with dramatic criticism, are not as formerly regulated by the *few* of *many* ages, who drew their knowledge from much reading, and observation.—they now assume a wider domain: *Modern poets* and *modern critics*, start up in such abundance, and come fitted for these offices so entirely *by the light of nature*, that a person who decided upon our dramatic

ii INTRODUCTION.

matic knowledge by the catalogue of our dramatic works, must not only turn from antiquity with contempt, but pronounce us at this day, the most polished, and informed people in this department, of any upon earth.

But there are periods in arts, that when they are most followed, they are least understood. This happens to be, at present, the case of our drama ; though *seemingly* surrounded with so many guardians, these very guardians have produced *two* sorts of enemies, who have perhaps degraded it much below any situation since its establishment in this country. The first—a feeble — common-place morality, which has neither knowledge, character, or genius, for its support ; — the second, a raw unprincipled criticism, the spawn of so flimsy a parent. Hence rules are despised, because not studied ; ranks

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ranks confounded, because not known ; and great masters insulted through an indolence, or incapacity of receiving their instructions.

To rescue the misguided part of the public from such *little law-givers*, and settle the knowledge of the stage on some more respectable, and permanent foundation, has been my attempt in the following sheets ; wherein I have endeavoured to go through a regular analysis of the drama, from its noblest and most instructive heights, to its humblest and most irregular walks ;—a subject, however *partly* treated of by some of the ablest, and oldest critics in most languages, yet never (at least in the course of my reading, or enquiries) given in this regular order.

At the same time, that I claim the *novelty* of this attempt, the assistance

iv INTRODUCTION.

sistance of many of those critics, is my greatest boast ; as vain would be my task, and imperfect my labours, did I presume singly on the credit of my abilities, in deciding on points which have taken up so much of the joint researches of the learned. I am satisfied with working after such great originals, happy if I am able to arrange their matter with precision, connect their observations with judgement, and in giving a *wholeness* to the design, not destroy the vigour of its component parts.

This general confession then, I hope will preclude me the vanity of a **DICTATOR**, whilst it will rescue me from the character of a *plagiary* ; particularly, when I previously declare, that those passages which I have made use of from other authors,

INTRODUCTION.

thors, and which I have not individually restored, were only done to avoid a multiplicity of references, which, in my opinion, too often *divide*, rather than assist the attention of the reader. In short, I have endeavoured with no inconsiderable attention, and industry, to form a work composed of such principles as may be thought well arranged, and properly digested; and in this view—*useful and entertaining*. If I should be disappointed, I shall not however, have that superstition for my authorities, as to take the whole fault upon myself, nor so much complaisance for myself, as not to attribute something to my own defects.

The latter part of this work, "*Instructions for succeeding in the art of acting*,"—claims a greater share

vi INTRODUCTION.

share of indulgence from the public, as in this I stand entirely *alone*; merely from not having such assistance as I could wish to avail myself of; most writers upon this subject, having been too rambling, or too impracticable theorists, to afford useful instructions. The desire, however, of perfecting a work on the drama, induced me to extend it *with this part*; as it need not be insisted on here, how intimately the business of the poet, and actor, should be connected; and how much it depends on the abilities of the latter, to give *persuasion* and *eclat* to the former.

To conclude.—I have bestowed as much care, and observation, on the several parts of this work, as an avocation from greater pursuits would permit; my object being to convince

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convince the public, that neither the *dictatorial air*, of most of our modern dramatists, nor the *false taste* which gives them a *temporary palm*, are indications of real genius, or a fundamental knowledge of their art. Let me be permitted to say, at the same time, I have a greater object in my view,—a wish to be foremost, in recovering the theatre from such *usurpers*, and restoring it to that respectable character it originally possessed — a PUBLIC SCHOOL OF VIRTUE, and of MANNERS.

E L E-

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E R R A T A.

Page 14, line the last, for *pronunciation* read *pronunciation*.
Page 61, line 23, for *another* read *an*.
Page 114, line 21, for *the* read *be*.
Page 122, line 24, dele *but*.
Page 168, line 6, for *pantomimer* read *pantomime*.
Page 190, line the last, dele *thes*.



E L E M E N T S

OF

DRAMATIC CRITICISM.

CHAPTER I.

A sketch of the origin of the antient Drama.

AS we shall have frequent occasion to make comparative views, and allusions to the antient Drama, it will be necessary for us to preface this work with a general view of it, in order that those who are not conversant in this branch of antient history, may be the better enabled to judge of the propriety, or impropriety of our observations.

Father Brumoy, and many other authors, have gone into a variety of accounts respecting the origin of the Drama, most of which

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carry the marks of such fable and uncertainty: that we cannot follow them with any degree of authority; all authors, however, agree that tragedy in Greece was derived from the hymns of Bacchus which were sung, in parts, by a chorus; this rural sacrifice became, in time, a solemn feast, and assumed all the pomp of a religious ceremony; poets were employed by the magistrate to compose hymns, or songs for the occasion, whilst the prize, (which as Horace intimates was scarce worth contending for, being no more than a goat-skin of wine) was given to the happy poet, who acquitted himself best in the task assigned him.

This was perhaps the period when Thespis first pointed out the tragic path, who exhibited his rude performances in a cart, and smeared the faces of his actors with the lees of wine, probably to disguise their persons, and give them the appearance of those whom they represented. To these innovations he introduced a new personage, who relieved the chorus, by reciting part of some well-known history, or fable, which gave time for them to rest: all that the actor repeated, between the songs of the chorus, was called an episode; consisting, often, of different adventures, which had no connection with each other.

other ; thus the chorus, or song, which was at first the only, and afterwards the principal performance, became gradually, and insensibly, but an inconsiderable, though, as we shall see hereafter, a necessary and ornamental part of the drama.

From this time, we may imagine, the actor, or reciter was more attended to than the chorus ; however his part was executed, it had the charms of novelty to recommend it, and quickly obscured the lustre of the chorus, whose songs were now of a different nature, insomuch, that the original subject of them, *the praise of Bacchus*, was, by degrees, either lightly mentioned, or forgotten. The priests, who, we may suppose, for a long time presided over the whole, grew alarmed at this open contempt of the deity, and unanimously exclaimed against it, as a profanation of those rites which they were bound to protect.

From the days of Thespis, to those of *Æschylus*, all is doubt, conjecture, and obscurity ; 'tis true, we have the names of many intermediate dramatists handed down to us, particularly a scholar of Thespis, named Phrynicus, who, it is said, wrote nine tragedies, for one of which he was fined fifty drachmas, because it was too deep and affecting ; but what that tragedy was, or those of his

cotemporaries, and immediate successors, we have no accounts, (their works being lost) that can be depended on with any degree of certainty, or precision.

Thus much, however, is probable, that tragedy, during the lives of these writers, made but a slow progress, and received very little, or perhaps no improvement; when, at length, the great *Æschylus* arose, who, from this rude and indigested chaos, created, as it were, a new world, in the dramatic system; He it was that introduced *dialogue*, that most essential part of tragedy, which, by the addition of a second personage, threw the whole fable into action, and restored the chorus to its antient dignity.

Æschylus did not stop here; resolving that no external ornaments should be wanting to render this his favourite child universally amiable, he cloathed her in the most splendid habit, and bestowed on her every thing that art could procure to heighten, or improve her charms; as he was himself both author, actor, and manager, he took upon him the whole conduct of the drama, and did not neglect the least part of it; he improved the scenery and decorations, brought his actors into a regular and well constructed theatre, raised his heroes on the *cothurnus*, or *buskin*, invented the *masques*,

masques, and introduced splendid habits with long trains, which gave an air of majesty and dignity to the performers.

From this æra then, we are to consider tragedy as an elegant and noble structure, built according to the rules of art, symmetry, and proportion; whose every part was in itself fair, firm, and compact, and at the same time contributed to the beauty, usefulness, and duration of the whole edifice. Sophocles and Euripides carefully studied the plan laid down by Æschylus, and by their superior genius and judgement, improved it, in a short time, to its highest state of perfection, from which it gradually declined to the introduction of the Roman drama.

C H A P. II.

Of the Prologue, Episode, Exode, and Chorus.

HAVING thus taken a cursory review of the origin, and establishment of the ancient drama, we shall next speak of its parts, which consisted of a beginning, a middle, and an end; or, in the words of Aristotle, the prologue, the episode, and exode. Horace has further told us, there should be five acts; “*Neque minor, neq; fit “quinto productior actu;*” but it does not from thence follow, that it always was so, as the Greek tragedies carry a convincing proof, that no such thing was ever thought of by them; several critics have indeed discovered an office for the chorus, which the poet never assigned them, by making those intervals which were supplied by the songs, *acts*—tho’ it is evident, that the business of the chorus was, on the other hand, to prevent that vacancy in the drama, which the division of acts must necessarily produce.

The *prologue* of antient tragedy contains all those circumstances which are necessary to be known, for the better understanding and comprehension of the whole drama; as the place

place of the scene, the time when the action commences, the names and characters of the persons concerned, together with such a view of the plot, as might awaken the curiosity of the spectator, without letting him too far into the design and conduct of it.

The *episode* is all that part of the tragedy, which is between the songs, or intermedes of the chorus: this answers to our second, third, and fourth acts, and comprehends all the intrigue, or plot to the catastrophe, which, in the best antient writers, is not made till after the last song of the chorus; the conduct and disposition of the episode, may be considered as the surest test of the poet's abilities, as it generally determines the merit, and decides the fate of the drama: here all the art of the writer is necessary to stop the too otherwise rapid progress of the fable, by the intervention of some new circumstance, that involves the persons concerned in fresh difficulties, awakens the attention of the spectators, and leads them, as it were, insensibly, to the most natural conclusion, and unravelling of the whole.

The *exode* is all that part of the tragedy, which is recited after the chorus has left off singing; it answers to our fifth act, and contains the unravelling, or catastrophe of the piece; after which, it is remarked by the

critics, any song of the chorus would only be tedious and unnecessary, because, what is said when the action is finished, cannot be too short.

The *chorus*, as we have before observed, gave the first hint to the formation of tragedy, and was, as it were, the corner-stone of the whole edifice ; as a religious ceremony, it was considered by the multitude with a kind of superstitious veneration, it is not therefore improbable, that the first authors of the regular drama, willingly gave way to popular prejudices ; and for this, amongst many other reasons, incorporated it into tragedy ; accordingly we find the *chorus* of *Æschylus* resuming its original office, reciting the praises of the local deities, demigods, and heroes taking the part of distressed virtue, and abounding throughout in all those moral precepts and religious sentiments, by which the general writings of the antients are so eminently and honourably distinguished.

The antients thought it highly improbable, that a great, or interesting event should be performed without witnesses ; their chorusses were, therefore, composed of such persons as most naturally might be supposed present on the occasion ; persons, whose situation might so far interest them in the events of the fable, as to render their presence useful and necessary ;

necessary ; and yet not so deeply concerned as to make them incapable of performing that office, to which they were more particularly appointed, the giving proper advice, and making proper reflections on every thing that occurred in the course of the drama ; for this purpose a *choriphæus*, or leader, superintended and directed ; the rest spoke for the whole body in the dialogue, and led the songs and dances in the intermede.

The chorus had likewise another office, which was to relieve the spectator, during the pauses and intervals of the action, by an ode or song adapted to the occasion, naturally arising from the incidents, and connected with the subject of the drama ; here the author generally gave a loose to his imagination, displayed his poetical abilities, and sometimes, perhaps too often, wandered from the scene of action into the regions of fancy ; the audience, notwithstanding were pleased with this short relaxation and agreeable variety ; soothed by the power of numbers, and the excellency of the composition, they readily forgave the writer, and returned, as it were, with double attention to his prosecution of the main subject : to this part of the antient chorus, we are indebted for some of the noblest flights of poetry, as well as the finest sentiments, that adorn the writings of the Greek tragedians.

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The number of persons composing the chorus, was probably at first indeterminate, varying according to the circumstances and plot of the drama; Aeschylus, we are told, brought no less than fifty into his *Eumenides*, in the form of furies, whose habits, gesture, and whole appearance, was, by the art of the poet, rendered so formidable as to frighten the whole audience, and make several women miscarry on the spot. This accident so alarmed the public, that a decree was immediately issued, to limit the number to twelve; Sophocles was afterwards permitted to add three more, a limitation, we have reason to imagine, became a rule to succeeding poets.

The chorus continued on the stage during the whole representation of the piece, unless when some very extraordinary circumstance required their absence; this obliged the poet to a continuity of action, as the chorus could not have an excuse for remaining on the spot, when the affair, which called them together, was at an end; it preserved also the unity of time, for, if the poet had comprehended in his play, a week, a month, or a year, how could the spectators be made to believe, that the people who were before them, could have passed so long a time without eating, drinking, or sleeping? Thus we find,

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find, that the chorus preserved all the unities of action, time, and place, that it prepared the incidents, and inculcated the moral of the piece, relieved, and amused the spectators, presided over, and directed the music, made a part of the decoration, and, in short, pervaded and animated the whole.

C H A P.

C H A P. III.

Of the Verse, Recitation, and Music.

THE art of poetry was, in one respect, considered by the antients, the art of making verses proper to be sung ; they looked upon words, not only as signs of particular ideas, but as sounds also, enabled by the assistance of music, to express all the passions of the human mind : the ancient audiences were all accustomed to this, as one of the first parts of their education was the knowledge of music, which they cultivated thro' life, with such assiduity, that it was reckoned a reproach to be ignorant of it ; hence the sense was equally fitted for the ear, as well as the heart. When dreadful or disagreeable objects were to be represented, the words were formed of such harsh and jarring syllables, as by grating on the ear, might best impress the exactest representation of them ; and, in like manner, when the grand, the beautiful, or the tender, was to be set before the imagination of the spectator, the language was carefully, and often, too studiously, adapted to it.

The Greeks, who were extremely solicitous to cultivate and improve their language
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to the highest degree of perfection, took more than ordinary care in the formation of their verse; the quantity of every syllable was carefully ascertained, different words, different dialects, and different feet were appropriated to different species of poetry, and none infringed on the rights and privileges of another; but tragedy, as the sovereign, assumed a kind of peculiar title to them all; every species of verse was occasionally introduced to adorn and beautify the drama; the Iambic was generally made use of in the body of the piece, as approaching, according to the judgement of Aristotle, nearest to common discourse, and therefore most naturally adapted to the dialogue; this rule, however, is not constantly and invariably observed, but sometimes departed from with judgement; the metre is frequently changed, not only in the songs of the chorus, but in other places, and that generally in the most interesting and impassioned parts of the drama, where it may here be observed, it is most probable, the music and instruments accompanying the verse, were changed also; a happy circumstance for the poet, as it must have afforded an agreeable relief to the audience, who would naturally be fatigued by the repetition of the same sounds, were they ever so harmonious.

It is more than probable, that the theatrical declamation of the antients was composed and written in notes, and that the whole play, from beginning to end, (except the commoii, and chorusses) were a kind of recitative, like our modern operas ; we are induced to this way of thinking, from an opinion of P. Meneſtrier, and several other learned men, that the custom of chaunting in churches was originally taken from the antient stage, as the theatres were open at the commencement of the christian æra ; and it is not improbable, but that the common people might recite our Saviour's passion after the manner of the tragedians ; one point, however, we are certain of, that in our nation, as well as in many others, the first tragedies exhibited, were on religious subjects ; and, in ſome places, continue ſo to this day.

The whole of the piece was accompanied with music, and the actor, who was the reciter, had little else to do, than carefully to observe the directions of the poet ; the quantity of every word was ascertained, the time, duration, and rhythmus of every syllable fixed by the musician, ſo that he could not easily mistake, or offend. The actor was not, as on our ſtage, left at liberty to murder fine ſentiment and language by wrong accents, and false pronœunciation, by hurrying over ſome parts with

with precipitancy, and drawing out others into a tedious monotony ; he was obliged to cultivate his voice, as well as his judgement.

Though music pervaded the whole of the antient drama, and, according to l'Abbe Du Bos, even assisted the gesticulation, we imagine the principal exertion of it's powers must have been reserved for the songs, where both the poetry and music admitted of much greater freedom and variety, than in the other parts of the drama : thus we see, in the antient theatre, music always accompanied her sister science ; assisted, animated, and supported her, and was in short, in all respects, her friend and fellow-labourer.

And here we cannot but remark, what a combination of talents, the office of a dramatic poet, in the time of antient tragedy, required ; for, besides all the other requisites, it was necessary that he should be master of every kind of verse, completely skilled in music, and able to direct all the evolutions, movements, or (if we so chuse to call them) the dances of the chorus ; a height of knowledge that can scarce be looked up to by our present race of pigmy stage writers, whose *patched* or *translated* performances have lately assumed the name of tragedy, and who owe one part of their success more to their *industry*, than their

their *parts*, and are indebted for the other to the false taste of the age, joined to the real merit of some principal performers.

After all, the use of music in tragedy, hath been a matter of much doubt and contention with modern critics ; M. Dacier thinks it, by no means, essential, and greatly condemns Aristotle for his approbation of it ; it seems to be, notwithstanding, indisputable, that on the antient stage, music was a most beautiful adjunct to poetry, and contributed, in a great measure to the polish of the Greek drama ; We cannot, perhaps, so easily resolve how far it may be reconcileable to modern usage, though, from some experiments on our own theatres, such as in sacrifices, processions, &c. we have reason to think, that when used, thus sparingly, and with judgement, it might be attended with its desired effect.

C H A P. IV.

Of the Masks of the Antients.

THOUGH the Romans have pretended to have been the first inventors of the mask, and that it was one Roscius Gallus, (according to Diomedes) who first wore one on their stage, to conceal the defects of squinting; the better, and more universal opinion gives it to Æschylus, who introduced it into Greece, upon the first establishment of that drama; this custom has been preserved in part on some modern stages, as a great many personages of the Italian comedy are still masked; and it is not a long while since (according to L'Abbé du Bos) they were frequently used on the French stage in the representation of comedies.

The antient players, as well in tragedy as comedy, had several sorts of masks, which they frequently changed; for the people belonging to the stage were of opinion, in those times, that a particular physiognomy was so very essential to the character, as to think it necessary to give the figure of the mask proper for the representation, in order to communicate a more complete representation. After

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the description, therefore, of each personage, such as they used to prefix to their theatrical pieces, under the title of *persons of the drama*, it was customary for them to give the figure of the mask, which appeared to them a necessary instruction.

But, as these stage ornaments are not so easily reconcileable to modern custom, we shall here give an account of their principal advantages on the antient stage. The use of masks prevented people from seeing an actor, advanced in years, play the part of a young lover ; Hippolytus, Hercules, and Nestor, appeared always upon the stage, with their heads distinguishable, by being suited to their known characters ; the vizard, under which the actor appeared, was always agreeable to the part he represented ; hence there was no such thing to be seen, as a player acting the part of a man of honour, with the physiognomy of an accomplished villain. “ When the composers of declamation, says Quintilian, introduce a piece upon the stage, they know how to draw the pathetic even from the very masks : in tragedies, Niobe appears with a sorrowful countenance ; and Medea announces her character by the fierce air of her physiognomy ; strength, and valour are painted on Hercules’s mask, whilst that of Ajax proclaims his transport and fury.

In comedies, the masks of slaves, pimps, parasites, peasants, soldiers, old women, courtisans, and like-slaves, have each their particular character: by the masks, we distinguish the cross old fellow, from the good-natured old gentleman; the sober youth from the debauched rake, and the young dandie from the lady of quality; if the father, who acts the principal character of the comedy, is to be sometimes pleased, and sometimes vexed, he must have one of the brows of his mask knit, and the other smooth, and he has a particular attention to shew that side of his mask to his spectators, which agrees with his present character."

The masks, likewise produced a great probability in those excellent plays, where the intricacy arises from the mistake, by which some of the actors take one personage for another; the spectator, who found himself mistaken, upon attempting to distinguish between two actors, whose mask was as like as possible, might easily conceive, that the actors themselves were deceived; thus he was soon imposed upon by the supposition on which the incidents of the piece are founded; whereas this supposition is so very improbable with us, that it is with great difficulty we give way to it; in several of our dramatic pieces, the plots of which are principally founded on

these mistakes, the audience perceive distinctly, that the personages who occasion them are really different; how is it possible then to conceive, that the actors, who are nearer to them, should be mistaken in this respect, but to the habit we have of humouring all the suppositions which custom has established on the stage, and which, from the frequency of the act, obliterates all the absurdity of it?

The masks, likewise, furnished the antients with the opportunity of making men act those female personages, whose declamation required robuster lungs than women generally have, especially when they were to make themselves heard in such spacious places as the Roman theatres; in fact, several passages of the antients, and amongst the rest a recital, which Aulus Gellius gives of the adventure that happened to a comedian, whose name was Polus, who acted the part of Electra, inform us, that it was customary for them to make men act female characters.

In the antient Greek comedy too, which allowed the poet the liberty of characterising any living citizen, the actor wore a mask, which exactly resembled the person to be represented in the play; and thus Socrates might have seen on the Athenian stage, when Aristophanes personated him in his comedy of "the Clouds,

Clouds," his second-self; without examining here into the unbridled licence of this usage, there is no doubt it's utility, in point of personification, was very great, as the poet had nothing to do, but to draw some leading traits of the mind; the painter made out the rest.

But, notwithstanding what has been advanced in favour of the antient masks, who is it that can be so attached to them, as not to prefer the natural display of the countenance to that imagined by art? The antient players frequent change of their masks, and the turning, occasionally, their different profiles to the audience, no doubt, gave them all that variety they were capable of; but who that has seen a Garrick thunder, and lighten, freeze, and dissolve, by the irresistible accompaniment of his features, but must turn with contempt from so feeble, so inadequate a substitute?

We are led to think, therefore, that the antients themselves, (who, to do them justice, scarce ever departed from nature, but on the best grounds) would have made their performers lay aside their masks, were it not for this reason; that, as their theatres were prodigious large, and without a roof, or solid covering, the mask was of use to the player,

inasmuch as it was so constructed to aid his voice, and make himself heard by all the spectators; beside, as it was impossible the finer alterations of the face, should be perceived by the audience, a great number of whom were upwards of twelve fathom from the stage, the features of the mask were made to answer so distant a perspective.

C H A P. V.

On the Division of theatrical Declamation between two Actors, one of whom pronounced, whilst the other gesticulated.

THE declamation of dramatic pieces, was frequently divided between two actors ; one of whom was obliged to pronounce, while the other performed the gesticulation. How to reconcile this seemingly strange mode to the modern stage is, perhaps, not altogether practicable ; however, as there are many reasons which, in a great measure, tend to illustrate this practice, we shall lay them before our readers, premising with the adventure which first established it as a custom.

“ Livius Andronicus *, a celebrated poet, who flourished about the year 514 of Rome, and near fourscore years after the theatres had been opened in that city, used to act in some of his pieces ; it was then a customary thing for dramatic poets to appear themselves on the stage, in order to recite some part of their works ; the people who assumed the liberty, *which they still preserve in France and Italy,*

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of

* Tit. Liv. his. lib. 7.

of desiring those passages to be repeated which pleased them most, by crying out so often the latin word *bis*, (which answers to the French word *encore* we make use of) made poor Andronicus recite so long, that at last he grew quite hoarse; finding himself, therefore, incapable of declaiming any longer, he made the people consent to his having a slave to recite the verses, whom he placed before the musician, whilst he made the same gesticulation, as if he himself had been reciting; it was then observed, that from this relief, his action grew more lively and animated, because he exerted his whole strength in gesticulating, whilst another had the care and trouble of pronouncing."

"Hence the practice arose, continues Livy, of dividing the declamation between two actors, and to recite, as it were, to the gesture and action of the comedian; and this custom has so far prevailed, that they pronounce nothing at present but the verses of the dialogue."

The art of gesture, suitable to the theatrical declamation, was subdivided into three different methods; the first taught the *Emilia*, proper for tragic declamation; the second the *Cordax*, fitted to the declamation of comedies; the third shewed the *Sicinnis*, a gesture proper for the recitation of those dramatic

matic pieces, which the antients called satires ; the personages who recited in these three kinds of poems, used several gesticulations particularly adapted to each.

How was it possible (some will say) for the antients to reduce those methods to writing, and to find out notes, and characters which should express all the attitudes and movements of the body ? really we cannot tell ; but Feuillee's Chorography (which we quote on the credit of L'Abbé Du Bos) shews the thing was possible ; there is no more difficulty in learning to make gestures by notes, than in knowing, by notes, how to make steps and figures ; now that the latter is possible, is laid to be demonstrated by Feuillee's book.

Though we have not reduced the use of gestures into an art, and for want of being sufficiently acquainted with this subject, have not consequently divided the objects as much as the antients ; yet it is visible, that tragedy, and comedy, even with us, have their own peculiar gestures ; the action, attitude, and countenance of our actors, who recite in tragedy, are not the same as when they act in comedy ; directed merely by instinct, they render us, in some respect, sensible of the principles on which the antients founded the division of theatrical gesture, and reduced it into three different methods,

“ Nature,

" Nature, as Cicero observes, having given each passion and sentiment its particular expression on the countenance, as well as its proper tone and gesture."

We find several things, in a chapter of Quintilian's institutes, where he speaks more copiously than elsewhere, of the gesture suitable to an orator, which plainly indicate, that the comedians had particular schools in his time, where they instructed in theatrical gesture; here he dissuades his pupil, sometimes from following what the comedians taught, in relation to some particular part of their action; and, at other times, he cites them as good masters; " Those who teach the scenic art (says he, in another part of the same chapter*) find, that the gesture made only with the head, is a bad gesture."

It even appears, that these professors had, what we call terms of art; for Quintilian, speaking of the countenance, which an orator should shew for some time, before he has commenced his discourse, (when the eyes of a whole audience are fixed upon him) says, " that the comedians gave, to this studied silence, the appellation of *pauses*."

But we shall endeavour to explain here, more intelligibly, than we have hitherto done, how the action of the player, who gesticulated,

lated, could accompany the pronunciation of the person that recited : the antient theatrical music was divided into two parts, the *hypocritical* and *matrical*; the former shewed the art of following the measure in *gesticulation*, as the latter did in *recital*; so that the actor who recited, and the person that gesticulated, were obliged to follow the same measure and time.

We have seen in Quintilian *, that they endeavoured to establish a proportion between the gesture and words of the orator, so that his action should be neither too quick, nor broken; very likely this idea arose from hence, that the actor, who recited on the stage, ought to pronounce only a certain number of words, whilst the other made a particular gesture; be this as it will, 'tis certain they both folliotted the same measure beaten by the same person, who had before him the verses to be recited, and whose syllables pointed out the time; above these verses they noted the gestures which the players were to make, measure by measure.

In what manner soever this was done, we know that the actors agreed perfectly well in their different parts. Seneca says, " 'tis surprising to see the gesture of eminent comedians on the stage, overtake, and even keep pace

* Cap. ii. part 3.

pace with speech, notwithstanding the velocity of the tongue." "Tis plain, that Seneca's meaning does not relate here to a person, who executes both at the same time, for there is nothing less surprising, than to see his gesture move as quick as his pronunciation: the thing is very natural, and there can be no room for admiration, but when one actor recites, whilst another gesticulates: we find likewise, by a passage in Cicero, that a comedian, who dropped a gesture out of time, was hissed as much as one who was mistaken in pronouncing a verse; Lucian observes also, that a gesture, not in its proper measure, was esteemed a capital fault in an actor, which occasioned the proverb among the Greeks, "*To commit a solecism with the hand.*"

There is no manner of doubt then, but the antient comedians excelled in this part of the declamation; they had very great natural dispositions for it, if we may form a judgement of them, by what we observe even in their countrymen, our co-temporaries; they applied themselves with great care and assiduity to their profession, and that they arrived to a wonderful pitch of excellence in it, we shall add to the authorities we have already given, what a grave father * of the primitive church says of it, "That this gesticulation was as

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bewitching as the discourse of the serpent, who seduced the first Woman."

Did we prefer curiosity to utility, we could be much more diffusive upon the subject of the antient drama, by entering into minute details of the dresses, dances, construction of the theatres, &c. but, as our design is no more than to afford our readers a retrospective and general view, when we draw comparisons between the antient and modern stage, we have confined ourselves to *essentials*; referring those who would wish to get beyond this line to the elaborate, yet ingenious father Brumoy on the Greek theatre, who has, perhaps, with more learning and assiduity than the subject was worth, investigated every, the minutest article which antiquity has left us on this point.

C H A P. VI.

A. *Definition of Tragedy.*

“ **T**RAGEDY is the imitation of an action, which, by means of *terror* and *compassion*, refines and purifies in us all sorts of passion.” This is Aristotle’s account of it; and this is what the ablest critics, both antient and modern, have held to be the purest and most genuine illustration of it: there are other kinds of tragedy, no doubt, where the good are rewarded, and the bad punished; which, however admissible under this head, are incapable of producing such good effects as the former; our pity is engaged for the persons represented, and our terror is upon our own account; hence it being the province of *perfect tragedy*, to excite both *pity* and *terror*, an innocent person falling into adversity, ought never to be the subject of it; ‘tis true, such a one may excite *pity* and *terror*, but the former in an inferior degree, and the latter in no degree for moral instruction; the history of a wicked person, likewise in a change from misery to happiness, ought not to be represented, which excites neither *terror* or *compassion*,

passion, nor is agreeable in any respect; the misfortunes of a wicked person come under the same exclusion, as, however such a representation may be partly agreeable upon a principle of justice, it will not move our pity, nor any degree of terror, except in those of the same vicious disposition with the person represented; the only character, then, *most* fitted for a tragical subject, lies in the middle, neither eminently good, nor eminently bad, where the misfortunes are not the effect of deliberate vice, but of some involuntary fault.

But let us see how tragedy, thus defined, is capable of exciting terror and pity, in order to refine and purify in us all sorts of passion; it excites *terror* and *compassion* in us, by setting before our eyes the calamities which those, who are like ourselves, have fallen into by involuntary faults, and it refines them, by rendering those very misfortunes familiar to us, because it teaches us, not to be too much concerned when they really happen. Aristotle is not the only critic who has had this idea of tragedy, (though his opinion, from the greatness of his character, and the general subscription to it for above two thousand years past, should make it decisive.) The good emperor, Marcus Aurelius*, passed the

same

* Chap. vi. ninth book of his *Reflections*.

judgement on it in the following words : “Tragedies, says he, were first introduced, to put men in mind of those accidents which happen in their lives ; to inform them they must necessarily come, and teach them, that those things they see with so much delight on the stage, should not appear insupportable in the grand theatre of the world.”

The advantage tragedy brings to mankind, is by no means inconsiderable ; it prepares us to bear the most unlucky accidents courageously, and disposes the most miserable to think themselves happy, when they compare their own misfortunes with those which tragedy has represented to them ; in whatever condition a man may be, yet, when he shall see an *Oedipus*, or a *Lear*, he can but think his own afflictions light in comparison with theirs : but it stops not here ; it refines, at the same time, all those other passions which can precipitate us into the same troubles ; for, in exhibiting the crimes which have drawn those *miserables* into what they suffer, it teaches us to stand on our own guard, and powerfully induces us to moderate, and refine in ourselves what was the only cause of their loss ; thus tragedy becomes an useful medicine to the mind, by thoroughly purging the passions, at the same time that we receive a pleasure in the operation.

Having

Having given this brief illustration of tragedy, we shall now proceed to the four principal parts of which it is composed, and which are as follow :

F A B L E,

M A N N E R S,

S E N T I M E N T S,

D I C T I O N.

Aristotle, indeed, has added two more, *decoration* and *music*; but as these (though essentially necessary on the Greek stage) are considered at present little better than ornamental appendages, we shall make no apology for omitting them here.

C H A P. VII.

Of Fable.

FABLE, which is justly called the *soul* of a dramatic poem, is thus defined : “ A discourse, invented with art, to form the manners by instruction, disguised under the allegory of an action.” Aristotle has divided the fable into two parts, *simple* and *compound*. The simple fable is that in which there is neither change of condition, nor remembrance, and the unravelling of which is only a single passage of agitation, and trouble, repose, and tranquility ; or, according to Brumoy, where the hero of the piece, already unfortunate, arrives insensibly at the completion of wretchedness, like Phædra and Hippolitus ; or where he passes from happiness to misery, like Oedipus ; or, where he may rise from the depth of calamity, to a happy fortune like Nicomedes.

Compound-fable, is that which hath a change from bad fortune to good, or from good to bad ; that is, of two sorts of personages, the one criminal, the other virtuous ; they

they each may reverse the balance; the reward due to virtue may, in the end, be given to vice, that of vice to virtue; or the latter may be punished, and the former compensated.

The contrivance of each fable, must have likewise two parts; the *intrigue* and *discovery*; the *intrigue* should but dawn in the first act, and unfold itself progressively, (subject to occasional involutions) till the full *discovery* is made in the fifth; it is true, a number of theatrical pieces have their catastrophe in the latter end of the fourth act; but the former is the most favourable situation for a poet, not only as it is more agreeable to antient rules, but as it interests the minds of the audience, after the main subject is known, inferior matters are little attended to.

In respect to which of the two kind of fables pleases most, Aristotle prefers the *simple* as the most perfect; the *compound*, however, has its admirers; but then great care must be taken not to be betrayed into perplexity. Every thing should proceed from the very constitution of the subject, in such a manner, that what precedes, should produce; therefore, in all double plots, one of them must be of the nature of an episode;

for it would distract the spectator, instead of entertaining him, if he were forced to attend, at the same time, to two capital plots equally interesting: upon this account, the tragedy of Oroonoko (before it received its late judicious alterations) was highly censurable; the scenes which brought the family of the *Locks* into action, being ludicrous and farcical, destroyed the tone and effect of the principal plot, which is pathetic and affecting: it follows then, whenever a double plot is introduced, it should be not only subordinate to the principal, but so connected and interwoven, as to resemble shades of colours harmoniously mixed and blended.

It is necessary for a fable likewise, to have a just extent, that is, a *beginning*, a *middle*, and an *end*; and however the manner may be altered, these three conditions must be inviolably preserved; for both tragedy and epicædia mutually require actions which have these properties; and here we must remark, they differ from ordinary fables, (such as those of *Aesop*) that are often with a beginning and middle, yet without an end; but as these terms may not be thought sufficiently explicit, we will explain them more exactly: the cause and design of undertaking an action, are the *beginning*; the effects of these causes, and the difficulties we find in

the

the execution of that design, are the *middle* : the unravelling, and resolving those difficulties, are the *end* ; but to render this still plainer, by an example, the subject of the tragedy of Macbeth is that prince's ambition, which was destructive to himself ; now, the beginning of that action, is the resolution he has taken, from the prophecy of the weird sisters, that he *should* be king ; the *middle* is all the murders he waded through to obtain it ; and the *end* is, when after perpetrating these horrid actions, he is, himself, justly killed as an atonement for them.

In respect to the choice of a subject, 'tis a matter of indifference, whether it be taken from any well known point of history, or totally invented, provided, in the last case, it be probable and important ; but in chusing a subject that makes a figure in history, greater precaution is necessary, than where the whole is a fiction ; in the latter case, there is full scope for invention ; the author is under no restraint, other than that the characters and incidents be just copies of nature ; but where the story is founded on truth, no material circumstance must be added, but such as connects naturally with what is known to be true ; history may be supplied, but ought not to be contradicted : a poet should, therefore, not make Alexander in love with

Cleopatra, nor Cæsar the murderer of Brutus ; he should likewise shew the same respect to received and established fables, as he does to history ; the accounts we have received of these gods and heroes, have, for many ages, acquired a right of passing for truth ; nor are we entitled to contradict such relations ; he should not likewise, without great necessity, alter the manners and customs of these countries where he places his scenes ; further, the subject so chosen, should be distant in time, or, at least, in place ; the familiarity of recent persons and events ought to be avoided, as modern manners would make but a poor figure in tragedy.

We would not, however, be understood to fall into that vulgar track of under-rating every thing that is modern ; the roughness, plainness, and impetuosity of antient manners, shew better in tragedy, without being, perhaps, better fitted for society ; but without regard to this circumstance, it is the familiarity of modern manners, as well as modern heroes, that unqualify them for a lofty subject ; the dignity of both will be better understood in future ages, when they are no longer familiar ; men are, in this respect, like pictures, they claim a greater share of our admiration on being viewed at a certain distance ; when we come up too close to the one, we lose

lose all the benefit of light and shade; and on a nearer view of the other, we discover such vanities, little jealousies, and inequalities of mind, as are far from inspiring us with that love and veneration, which probably the same characters may afford several centuries back; therefore we readily join issue with that author, who says, "that the greatest enemies of the glory of heroes, are their *valet de chambres*; besides, as tragedy is fond of adorning her victims with crowns and sceptres, and the sovereign houses in our times, are so connected, one with another, by intermarriages, it would be almost impossible to exhibit, at present, upon any stage, a prince that had reigned within a hundred years in any neighbouring kingdom, in whom the sovereign of the country, where the piece was to be acted, would not find himself interested as a relation; this circumstance alone carries with it such obvious inconveniences, as makes any further objections unnecessary,

We are not ignorant, however, that both the practice of our justly admired Shakespeare, and several of the Greek poets, meet this last point in some opposition, but the divine fancy, and immortal sentiments of the former, in some respect, covered this sacrifice of truth, which he sometimes made to his

royal patroness * ; whilst the latter had been so educated in the republican spirit of Athens, as to justify to the public their endeavours to make monarchy odious by every method in their power ; hence the Greek poets have sometimes disfigured the true character of several of their living sovereigns ; hence they have so frequently introduced Orestes upon the stage, as a most unhappy person, and pursued by the furies, tho' historians mention this prince to have lived to a great age, and to have had a long and prosperous reign over his people †.

After a proper subject is chosen, the dividing it into parts requires some art ; the Greeks, as we have already observed, knew of no other division than that of a *beginning*, a *middle*, and an *end* ; however, as Horace has given the law for five acts, and the moderns have all followed him, every author should govern himself by an opinion, so universally subscribed to, taking care, to let the old Greek law (the beginning, middle, and end) be, at the same time, conspicuous in his work ; for without this, (as we have before observed) neither tragedy nor *Epopæia* can possibly exist.

In the division of the acts, the conclusion of each should not be looked on as arbitrary, or

or intended for so slight a purpose, as to make the parts of equal length; the supposed pause, at the end of every book, and the real pause at the end of every act, ought always to coincide with some pause in the action; in this respect, a dramatic poem ought to resemble a period in language, divided into members, that are distinguished from each other by proper points; or a piece of music, having a full close at the end, preceded by imperfect closes that contribute to the melody.

Every act ought, therefore, to terminate with some incident that makes a pause in the action, for otherwise there can be no pretence for interrupting the representation; it would be absurd to break off in the very heat of action, against which every one would exclaim; the absurdity still remains, though the action relents, if it be not actually suspended for some time; this rule is also applicable to an epic poem, though there a deviation from the rule is less remarkable, because it is in the reader's power to hide the absurdity, by proceeding instantly to another book.

We have already said, on the opening of this chapter, what kind of character, in respect to morals, should be chosen as the hero of tragedy; we are now to speak of his quality; and here Aristotle gives the rule: "he

must

must be chosen from amongst those who are of eminent quality and great reputation." 'Tis true, there happen extraordinary and tragical adventures enough amongst people of low and middling conditions, which might take place in tragedy; but we believe such would never succeed so well, not by reason of the action, for that would have all the necessary and requisite qualifications, but on account of the degree of the persons, whose change of misery, would not give such lively impressions of either *terror* or *compassion* as the other; beside, the greatness of eminent men render the action great, and their reputation makes it credible; a foot soldier may shew more courage and prudence in the day of battle than his general, yet the victory will be ascribed to the latter, on account of the superiority of his station, and the probability of the cause.

It has been a question of some agitation amongst the critics, "Whether it be proper to make the hero of a tragedy a *lover*?" The rigid admirers of the antients preclude it, on the principle of admitting no such *infirmity* in the character of a great man, not considering, that to keep up the prevailing idea in a warlike people, it was then, perhaps, more necessary, than for us to banish a passion which tended, even in the *smallest*

smallest instance, to obtrude upon *military glory*; but without deciding positively on either side, of which so much has, or may be said, we shall offer a few reasons in defence of those moderns who admit it in their pieces.

The picture of a passion which we have never felt, or of a situation wherein we have never been, can never move us, in so lively a manner, as the descriptions of such passions and situations as either are, or have been formerly our own case; in the first place, the mind is but slightly touched with the picture of a passion, whose symptoms it is a stranger to; it is afraid even of being the dupe of an unfaithful imitation; now, the mind has but an imperfect knowledge of passions which the heart never felt; all the information we can receive of others, being insufficient to give us a just and precise idea of the agitations of a heart over which they tyrannize. Secondly, our hearts must generally have very little inclination to such passions as we have been insensible of in our youth; the heart attains to its full strength much earlier than the mind; and it is almost impossible, we think, for a young man, not to have felt the motions all of those passions which he is subject to by the *laws* of his constitution.

How

How is it possible for a man, who has no taste for military glory, and who looks upon what is commonly called a great conqueror, only as a madman, and a burden to mankind ? How is it possible for him to be deeply affected with the restless ambition and impetuosity of Achilles, when he imagines a conspiracy formed to prevent him from going to acquire immortality by the taking of Troy ?

A man likewise, who is insensible of the allurements of gaming, is not very deeply moved with the distress of a person who has lost considerable sums of money at play, (other than that pity he has for his contracting so dangerous a habit) unless he happens to be related to him by some of those particular interests, which oblige us to sympathize with our afflicted friends ; 'tis amongst those who are afflicted with the like misfortunes as ourselves, that we are led by instinct to associate with, such generally make themselves partners of our pains, and console us with their sympathy : Dido, under this influence, immediately conceives a passion for Aeneas, obliged to fly his native country, because she herself was under the same predicament, which she expresses in the following line :

Non ignara mali miseris succurrere disco.

VIRGIL *Æn.* 1,

If

If poets, therefore, cannot be blamed in chusing for the subject of their imitations, the effects of these particular passions of which men are susceptible, how much less so for imitating the effects of *love*, which is confessedly the most general of all; there being scarce any one but who has had the misfortune (if we can call a passion, so congenial to our natures, by so harsh a name) of feeling the effects of it in some part, or other of his life.

We will therefore submit these reasonings to the candid critic, and ask him, whether the poets should be censured, for giving so universal a passion a place in the intrigues of their pieces, which, probably, was banished the antient stage, only for *reasons of state*? 'Tis true, a degree of *moderation* is highly necessary to be observed in the use of it; as we see, for want of this, several modern dramatists finding it easier to imitate good poets in their defects, than in their perfections, have pushed their complaisance too far for the taste of their own times, or, to express it better, they have even encouraged this taste themselves, by a servile condescension, 'till by improving upon one another's errors, they have converted the dignity of the *stage* into little better than the fooleries and intrigues of a *drawing-room*.

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We shall close our remarks on *fable*, with observing after Aristotle, “ that those who undertake to make a tragedy, will find it much easier to succeed in the style and manner, than to form the subject rightly ; and the reason he gives, to shew the advantage the subject has over all the other parts of tragedy, is drawn from the difficulty which is always found in disposing it in preference to the other parts ; for, 'tis a truth, confirmed by the experience of all ages, that in all arts whatever, that which is the principal is most difficult, and arrives latest to its perfection.

C H A P. VIII.

Of Manners.

ARISTOTLE defines the manners of dramatic poetry thus: "The manners, says he, are what discover the inclination of him who speaks, and whereby we know on what he will determine, before one sees that he is carried that way, or actually rejects it." We shall illustrate this definition, which is supported by Bosſu, and some of the ableſt of the moderns, by the following instance:

In the first act of Othello, Desdemona is described by him, in his speech before the senate, beside many other amiable qualities, as attached to him, on such principles of mental affection, that even, in spite of his being of a different colour, and of unequal years, nothing can alter; a little after, a very difficult choice is proposed to her, whether she will follow her first inclination, and go with her husband, or take the advantage of her father's tenderness, by disclaiming so imprudent, and, in some respect, so unnatural a match? on the one side gratitude, filial affection, and parental

rental authority, plead to make her resolve on the latter ; on the other, conjugal duty, tho' attended with the loss of fortune, rank, and parental love, is the only attachment ; yet before we see what resolution she will take, the description which Othello has given of her, and the manner of his wooing her, lead us to decide how her inclinations are, and to what she will determine : these then are the *dramatic manners*, which are, in this respect, good and uniform ; if she staid with her father, the manners had been bad, because we should foresee a choice and resolution quite contrary to that which she ought to take ; but if she had taken no resolution, one way or other, but left the senate to decide for her, then there would be no manners at all.

Therefore, as in philosophy, the manners are good, when they make that man so, in whom they are ; and they are bad, when they incline him to vice and evil actions ; so likewise in tragedy, the manners are good, when one may discover the virtue, or vice, the good, or bad inclinations of those who speak, or act ; but bad when a good man appears vicious, or a wicked man seems to have good inclinations ; hence the manners of Tamerlane and Richard III. considered *poetically*, are both equally good, because they equally demonstrate the virtuous

virtuous king on the one side, and the arbitrary tyrant on the other, which are the characters the poets bestowed on them, and under which they are uniformly represented.

Manners should have likewise four qualities: first, they should be *good*; second, *suitable*; third, *likely* and *agreeable*; and fourth, *even*. The *goodness* which belongs to poetical manners, being to make them appear such as they are, it is necessary to observe, what are the things which discover to us the inclinations of the personages: and first, the speeches and actions; “there are manners in a poem, (says Aristotle) if, as we said, the speeches and actions discover to us any inclination;” so that these two things are wholly owing to the poet, who makes his personages speak and act as he pleases, and they are the foundation of all the rest; when the manners are well expressed after this way, they are denoted purely and simply by the term *good*, and this *goodness* makes their first and principal qualification. Aristotle places it in the front of all the rest, that it may be the more exactly observed; and Horace gives the same lesson with his usual accuracy and knowledge.

“ *Notandi sunt tibi mores.*”

The second thing is the knowledge, which a genius, study, and experience give us of the *inclinations*, that are proper to each person, according to the complexion, the dignity, and all the other causes, whether natural, or acquired, internal, or external. As soon as the poet has given the dignity of a king to one of his characters, without hearing him speak, or seeing him act, we know that he ought to be grave, majestic, jealous of his authority, and the like; the inclinations should be *suitable* to that which the poet has proposed; and this *suitableness* forms the second quality in manners.

The third, is the knowledge which we deduce from the fable, or the history; this sort of discovery is comprehended under the name of *common opinion*, or *fame*; so that when a poet has named Alexander, we know, that the inclination of this personage is all for greatness and glory, and that his ambition is larger than the extent of the whole earth; if he introduces Richard, or Macbeth, we likewise know they are, besides being ambitious, cruel, and vindictive.

But it sometimes happens that manners may be made *like*, and not *agreeable*, and *agreeable*, yet not *like*; for instance, if a poet should represent an emperor, whom history has described as *bold* and *covetous*, to give him manners that were *like*, would

would, by no means, be *agreeable*, because nothing can be more indecent and unworthy so dignified a personage ; on the contrary, if he should make him magnificent and liberal, he would indeed give him *manners*, which would be *agreeable*, but then they would not be *like*, since they would be contrary to the opinion which was commonly received of him. What must be done then, that the poet offend neither against the *agreeableness*, nor the *likeness* in the character of this emperor ? why he must dissemble his avarice, (says M. Dacier, in his notes upon Aristotle) without changing it into liberality ; 'tis thus Mr. Corneille has used it in his *Heraclius*, in the character of the emperor Maurice, by suppressing this evil inclination in him, which was not *agreeable*, and yet not giving him the contrary qualities, which would be *unlike* : thus the manners of those heroes in tragedy should be like those which *fame* has reported of them, under this limitation ; and this resemblance makes the third qualification of manners.

The fourth and last quality in manners is, that they be *even*, that is, consistent throughout the whole character.

— *servetur ad imum*

Qualis ab incepto processerit, et sibi constet.

HOR.

not, however, that the person is always to betray the same sentiments, or one and the same passion, this would be as absurd as tedious; but that he should never speak, or act repugnant to his fundamental character; an old, or a young man, for instance; a king, or a servant, may, nay ought, as occasion serves, to shew the common passions of joy, or sorrow; but for an old man to be introduced in the first act, and to appear a young one in the second, is inverting nature. Again, the weak may sometimes break out into a sally of warmth, and the breast of the passionate may sometimes be calm; a change which, often, introduces into the drama a very affecting variety; but if the natural disposition of the former was to be represented as boisterous, and that of the latter mild and soft, they would both act out of character, and contradict the persons they would represent.

But to illustrate this further, by a dramatic example in the tragedy of *Venice Preserv'd*; in the beginning of the play, Jaffier is represented as gentle, good-natured, and, above all, living but in the affections of his wife; yet towards the close, we find the very same character engaged in a conspiracy and murder; a person may therefore fancy, according to these different states, he may likewise make the characters of his heroes different,

rent, and that the manners of each part would be good in particular ; but though Jaffier seems to be thus a different character, yet this change is no more than what is very reconcileable from the beginning ; if we consider his distressed fortune, his resentment to his father-in-law (against whom, as one of the senators, he conspires,) and his inviolable affection to Belvidera ; to contribute to whose conveniences, he engages in this very conspiracy.

These then are the four qualifications of manners, which are become standard from a coincidence of the most respectable authorities, both antient and modern.

C H A P. IX.

Of Sentiments.

EVERY thought prompted by passion, is termed a *sentiment*; or, in the words of Aristotle, “Sentiments are what make the matter of a discourse, and consist in proving, refuting, and exciting the passions, as pity, anger, fear, &c. &c.” Hence the following rule, concerning dramatic compositions, that a passion be adjusted to the character, and sentiments to the passion; if nature be not faithfully copied in each of these, a defect in execution is perceived; there may appear some resemblance, but the picture, upon the whole, will be insipid, thro’ want of grace and delicacy; therefore as a painter, in order to represent the various attitudes of the body, ought to be intimately acquainted with muscular motion, so no less intimately acquainted with emotions, and characters ought a poet be, in order to represent the various attitudes of the mind.

To speak in the language of music, each passion hath a certain tone to which every sentiment proceeding from it, ought to be tuned

tuned with the greatest accuracy: this is no easy work, especially when such harmony ought to be supported during the course of a long theatrical representation; in order then to reach such delicacy of execution, it is necessary that a writer assume the precise character and passion of the personage represented, which requires no inconsiderable effort of genius; but if a lively picture, even of a single emotion, requires this effort, how much greater the effort to compose a passionate dialogue with as many different tones of passion as there are speakers? With what ductility of feeling must that writer be endued, who approaches perfection in such a work, when it is necessary to assume different, and even opposite characters and passions in the quickest succession?

But how hard dialogue writing is, would be evident, even without any reasoning, from the miserable compositions of that kind found without number in all languages. The truth is, such execution is too delicate for an ordinary genius ; and for that reason the bulk of writers, instead of expressing a passion as one does who feels it, content themselves with describing it, in the language of a spectator ; to awake passion by an internal effort, merely without any external cause, requires great sensibility ; and yet this operation is ne-

cessary, not less to the writer, than to the actor; because none but those, who actually feel a passion can represent it to the life; the writer's part is the more complicated; he must add composition to passion, and must, in the quickest succession, adopt every different character.

On the contrary, an humble flight of imagination may serve to convert a writer into a spectator, so as to describe, in some obscure manner, an action as passing in his sight and hearing; in that situation, being naturally led to write like a spectator, he entertains his readers with his own reflections, with cool descriptions, and florid declamation, instead of making them eye-witnesses, as it were, to a real event, and to every movement of genuine passion; thus the bulk of modern plays appear all to be cast in the same mould, insipid reasoning, tame descriptions, and personages without the least idea either of character, or passion.

As we find, that in the discussion of this subject, it would be almost endless, to trace even the ordinary passions through all their minute differences, we shall, for the sake of adding example to precept, select from the most celebrated of our dramatic writers, such passages, where the sentiments best express the

the passions, and contrast them with others, which fall short of so necessary an union.

We shall furnish the first example from Shakespeare, being sentiments dictated by a violent and perturbed passion.

Lear. — filial ingratitude !
Is it not, as if this mouth should tear this hand
For lifting food to't ? but I'll punish home ;
No—I will weep no more—in such a night
To shut me out ! Pour on, I will endure.
In such a night as this ! O Regan, Goneril !
Your old kind father, whose frank heart gave all—
O ! that way madness lies ; let me shun that ;
No more of that.

Kent. Good, my Lord, enter here.

Lear. Pr'ythee, go in thyself.—Seek thine own ease,
This tempest will not give me leave to ponder
On things would hurt me more : but I'll go in ;
In, boy. Go first—you houseless poverty—
Nay, get thee in ; I'll pray, and then I'll sleep—
Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,
That hide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
How shall your houseless heads, and unfed sides,
Your loop'd, and winnow'd raggedness defend you
From seasons such as these ?—O ; I have ta'en
Too little care of this ! Take physic pomp ;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou mayst shake the superflux to them,
And shew the heavens more just.

Lear, A&T III. Scene 5th.

The following example is expressive of sentiments arising from remorse and despair.

Othello. Lo ! I have a weapon :
A better never did itself sustain

Upon

Upon a soldier's thigh. I've seen the day,
 That with this little arm, and this good sword,
 I've made my way through more impediments
 Than twenty times your strop. But, oh vain boast !
 Who can controul his fate ? 'tis not so now.
 Be not afraid, though you do see the weapon'd ;
 Here is my journey's end—here is my butt,
 The very sea-mark of my ultimate fail.
 Do you go back dismay'd ? 'tis a lost fear,
 Man but a rush against Othello's breast,
 And he retires.—Where shou'd Othello go ?
 Now—How doff thou look now ! oh ill-starr'd wench !
 Pale as thy smock ! when we shall meet at compt,
 This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven,
 And fiends will snatch at it—cold—cold, my girl,
 Ev'n like thy chastity—O cursed slave !
 Whip me, ye devils—
 From the possession of this heavenly sight ;
 Blow me about in winds, roast me in sulphur,
 Wash me in steep-down gulphs of liquid fire—
 Oh ! Desdemona ! Desdemona ! dead ! dead ! oh ! oh !

Othello, Act V. Scene 9th.

The sentiments here displayed, flow so naturally from the passions represented, that we cannot conceive any imitation more perfect ; but to proceed to more particular observations, passions seldom continue uniform any considerable time ; they generally fluctuate, swelling, and subsiding by turns ; often in a quick succession ; the sentiments, therefore, cannot be just, unless they correspond to such fluctuation ; nor can a climax be shewn better than in expressing a swelling passion ; the following

following passages may suffice for an illustration :

Oroonoko. Can you raise the dead ?
 Pursue and overtake the wings of time ?
 And bring about again, the hours, the days,
 The years, that made me happy ?

Oroonoko, Act II. Scene 2d.

Almeria. How hast thou charm'd
 The wildness of the waves, and rocks to this ?
 That thus relenting, they have given thee back
 To earth, to light, and life, to love, and me ?

Mourning Bride, Act I. Scene 7th.

The following passage finely expresses the progress of conviction.

Let me not stir, nor breathe, lest I dissolve
 That tender, lovely form of painted air
 So like Almeria. Ha ! it sinks—it falls.
 I'll catch it ere it goes, and grasp her shade,
 'Tis life ! 'tis warm ! 'tis she, 'tis she herself !
 It is Almeria ! 'Tis—it is my wife !

Mourning Bride, Act II. Scene 6th.

In the progress of thought, our resolutions become more vigorous, as well as our passions—

If ever I do yield, or give consent
 By any action, word, or thought, to wed
 Another Lord ; may then just hear'n shew'r down, &c.
Mourning Bride, Act I. Scene 1st.

A person sometimes is agitated, at once, by different passions ; and the mind, in that case, vibrating

vibrating like a pendulum, vents itself in sentiments that partake of the same vibration, as in the three following instances :

Henry VIII. Act III. Scene 1st.

Othello. ——, oh ! devil ! devil !
If that the earth could teem with woman's tears,
Each drop she falls, would prove a crocodile.
Out of my sight. ——

Desdemona. I will not stay t'offend you, (going.)

Lodovico. Truly an obedient lady.

I do beseech your lordship call her back.

Othello. Mistrefs!

Def. My lord

My lord.
What was

Sir. What would you with her, Sir?
Led. What I may have?

20a. Who, I, my lord?

6th. Aye—You did wish that I would make her turn.

Sir—he can turn, and turn, and yet go on;

And turn again—and she can weep, Sir, weep;

And she's obedient: as you say obedient,

Very obedient—proceed you in your tears—

Concerning this, Sir,—oh! well painted passion!

I am commanded home—get you away—

I'll send for you anon—Sir. I obey the m—

And will return to Venice. Hence avaunt.

and will return to Venice. Hence avaunt. Othello. Act I.

Othello, Act IV. Scene 6th.

Oth.

Oth. How shall I murder him, Iago?

Iago. Did you perceive how he laugh'd at his vice?

Oth. Oh ! Iago !

Iago. And did you see the handkerchief?

Oth. Was that mine ?

Iago. Your's by this hand, and to see how he prizes
The foolish woman your wife—she gave it him,
And he hath given it his whore.

Oth. Oh ! I would have him nine years a killing.
A fine woman ! a fair woman ! a sweet woman !

Iago. Nay, you must forget that—

Oth. Ay—let her rot, and perish, and be damn'd to
night, for she shall not live.—No, my heart is turn'd to
stone. I strike it, and it hurts my hand—oh ! the world
hath not a sweeter creature—She might lie by an em-
peror's side, and command him tasks.

Iago. Nay, that's not your way—

Oth. Hang her, I do but say what she is—so delicate
with her needle—an admirable musician—oh ! she will
sing the savageness out of a bear.

Othello, Act IV. Scene 5th.

Another observation should be attended to in the representation of immoderate passions, that their genuine sentiments ought to be hid, or dissembled as much as possible, and this should be particularly observed with respect to criminal passions ; a person never counsels the commission of a crime in plain terms : guilt must not appear in its native colours, even in thought ; the proposal must be made by hints, and by representing the action in some favourable light. Of the propriety of sentiment upon such an occasion, Shakespeare, in the

Tempest,

Tempest, has given us a beautiful example in the usurping duke of Milan's speech, advising Sebastian to murder his brother, the king of Naples.

Antonio. —— what might
Worthy Sebastian—O what might—no more.
And yet methinks, I see it in thy face
What thou should'ft be : th' occasion speaks thee,
And my strong imagination sees a crown
Dropping upon thy head.

Act II. Scene 1st.

But the most perfect illustration of this kind, is that of king John soliciting Hubert to murder the young prince Arthur.

K. John. Come hither, Hubert. O my gentle Hubert,
We owe thee much ; within this wall of flesh
There is a soul counts thee her creditor,
And with advantage means to pay thy love.
And, my good friend, thy voluntary oath
Lives in this bosom, dearly cherished.
Give me thy hand, I had a thing to say—
But I will fit it with some better time.
By heav'n, Hubert, I'm almost ashamed
To say what good respect I have of thee.

Hubert. I'm much bounden to your majesty.

K. John. Good friend, thou hast no cause to say so ;
Yet ——
But thou shalt have—and creep time ne'er so slow,
Yet it shall come for me to do thee good.
I had a thing to say—but let it go :
The sun is in the heaven, and the proud day,
Attended with the pleasures of the world,
Is all too wanton, and too full of gawds
To give me audience. If the midnight bell

Did

Did with his iron tongue, and brazen mouth,
 Sound *one* into the drowsy race of night ;
 If this same were a church-yard where we stand,
 And thou possessed with a thousand wrongs ;
 Or, if that surly spirit melancholy
 Had bak'd thy blood, and made it heavy-thick,
 Which else runs trickling up and down the veins,
 Making that Ideot laughter, keep mens eyes,
 And strain their cheeks to idle merriment,
 (A passion hateful to my purposes)
 Or, if that thou couldst see me without eyes,
 Hear me without thine ears, and make reply
 Without a tongue, using conceit alone,
 Without eyes, ears, and harmful sounds of words ;
 Then in despight of broad-ey'd watchful day,
 I would into thy bosom pour my thoughts.
 But ah, I will not—yet I love thee well ;
 And, by my troth, I think thou lov'st me well.

Hubert. So well, that what you bid me undertake,
 Though that my death were adjunct to the act,
 By heav'n I'll do't.

K. John. Do not I know — thou would'st ?
 Good Hubert, Hubert, Hubert, throw thine eye
 On yon young boy.—I'll tell thee what, the friend ;
 He is a very serpent in my way,
 And wherefoe'er this foot of mine doth tread,
 He lies before me. Do'st thou understand me ?
 Thou art his keeper.

King John, Act III. Scene 5th.

We come now to contrast these examples with sentiments that appear *faulty*, and the first class we shall begin with, are sentiments which accord not with the passion, and are faulty, insomuch that they are screwed up beyond the proper key.

Othello.

Othello. —— O my soul's joy !
 If after every tempest come such calms,
 May the winds blow 'till they have waken'd death ;
 And let the labouring bark climb hills of seas
 Olympus high, and duck again as low
 As hell's from heaven !

Othello, Act II. Scene 6th.

However the above sentiments may be suggested by violent and inflamed passion, they are not suited to the satisfaction, however great, we feel upon escaping danger.

Another example of the same kind.

Philaster. Place me, some god, upon a pyramid
 Higher than hills of earth, and lend a voice
 Loud as your thunder to me, that from thence
 I may discourse to all the under world.
 The worth that dwells in him.

Philaster, Act IV.

Sentiments too *artful* to be suggested by severe grief.

Almeria. O no ! time gives encrease to my afflictions.
 The circling hours that gather all the woes
 Which are diffused through the revolving year,
 Come heavy laden with th' oppressive weight
 To me ; with me successively they leave
 The sighs—the tears, the groans—the restless cares,
 And all the damps of grief, that did retard their flight ;
 They shake their downy wings, and scatter all
 The dire collected dews on my poor head ;
 Then fly with joy, and swiftness from me.

Mourning Bride, Act I. Scene 1st.

In

In the same play, Almeria seeing a dead body, which she takes to be Alphonso's, again falls into sentiments which are too artificial for the occasion.

Had they, or hearts, or eyes, that did this deed?
 Could eyes endure to guide such cruel hands?
 Are not my eyes guilty alike with theirs,
 That thus can gaze, and yet not turn to stone?
 — I do not weep! — the springs of tears are dry'd,
 And of a sudden, I am calm, as if —
 All things were well; and yet my husband's murthered!
 Yes, yes, I know to mourn, I'll sluice this heart,
 The source of woe, and let the torrent loose.

Act V. Scene 11th.

Sentiments which degenerate into point, or conceit, however they may amuse an idle hour, can never be the offspring of any serious, or important passion. Thus Rowe, who has been in many parts successful in the character of Jane Shore, yet makes her, in the following situation, descend into *anti-theft* and *affection*, below the dignity of her mind —

— Let me be branded for the public scorn,
 Turn'd forth, and driven to wander like a vagabond.
 Be friendless, and forsaken, seek my bread
 Upon the barren wild, and desolate waste,
Feed on my sighs, and drink my falling tears,
 Ere I consent to teach my lips injustice,
 Or wrong the orphan who has none to save him.

Jane Shore, Act IV.

F

Sentiments

Sentiments introduced too early, or too late; when *Betwidera* tells her father *Priuli*, of the danger she was in from her husband's threatening to murder her, and which ought naturally to have alarmed him; instead of this, he dissolves into that kind of tenderness for his daughter, as if he had already delivered her from danger.

Priuli. Can't thou forgive me all my follies past?
I'll henceforth be indeed a father, never,
Never more thus expose, but cherish thee,
Dear as the vital warmth that feeds my life,
Dear as those eyes that weep in fondness o'er thee:
Peace to thy heart.

Venice Preserv'd, A& 5th.

Immoral sentiments exposed in their native colours, instead of being concealed, or disguised: thus lady Macbeth, projecting the death of the king, has the following soliloquy.

— The raven himself's not hoarse
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements. Come all you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe, topful
Of direct cruelty—make thick my blood,
Stop up th' access, and passage to remorse,
That no compunctionous visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose. *Macbeth*, A& I. Scene 7th.

This speech we cannot think natural; the most treacherous murder, we hope, was never per-

perpetrated by the most hardened miscreant without compunction ; in that state of mind, it is a never-failing artifice of self-deceit, to draw the thickest veil over the most wicked action, and to extenuate it by all the circumstances which imagination can suggest ; and if the mind even cannot bear disguise, the next attempt is to thrust it out from its counsel altogether, and rush in upon action without thought ; this last was her husband's method,

Strange things I have in head, that will to hand,
Which must be acted, ere they must be scann'd.

Act III. Scene 5th.

Congreve, in our opinion, errs on the same principle in the *Double Dealer*, where Maskwell, instead of disguising, or colouring his crimes, piques himself on them in the following soliloquy.

Cynthia, let thy beauty gild my crimes, and whatsoever I commit of treachery, or deceit, shall be imputed to me as a merit—treachery ! What treachery ? Love cancels all the bonds of friendship, and sets men right upon their first foundations.

Double Dealer, Act II. Scene 8.

Sentiments inconsistent in themselves,

Now bid me run,
And I will strive with things impossible,
Yea, get the better of them.

Julius Caesar, Act V. Scene last.

Sentiments which are mere rant.

Coriolanus speaking to his mother.

— What is this?
 Your knees to me? to your corrected son?
 Then let the pebbles on the hungry beach
 Fillop the stars, then let the mutinous winds
 Strike the proud cedars 'gainst the fiery sun;
 Murd'ring impossibility, to make
 What cannot be, slight work.

Coriolanus, Act V. Scene 3d.

Other examples of the same kind.

Cæsar. — Danger knows full well
 That Cæsar is more dangerous than he.
 We were two lions littered in one day,
 And I the elder and more terrible.

Julius Cæsar, Act II. Scene 4th.

Ventidius. — But you—ere love misled your
 wand'ring eyes,
 Were sure the chief, and best of human race,
 Fram'd in the very pride, and boast of nature,
 So perfect, that the gods who form'd you, wonder'd
 At their own skill, and cried—“A lucky hit
 Has mended our design.”

Not to speak of the impiety of this last sentiment, it is ludicrous, instead of being lofty.

We could have swelled this last class to an immoderate size, from the *ravings* of Lee, and the declamations of more modern dramatists; (numbers of whom have scarcely

given specimens enough of their understanding, to be incident to poor Lee's misfortune ;)—but this, as well as all the other classes of *faulty* passages, we have selected from the most *approved* *authors*, for the purpose of shewing, what a necessity persons of the greatest genius are under, of correcting the first flights of imagination.

C A H P. X.

Of Diction.

THOUGH the fable, the manières, and the sentiments are, without doubt, the more considerable parts of tragedy; yet an improper diction renders the dialogue flat, however elevated the sentiments may be; and though, to a critical mind, it doth not absolutely destroy the strength of the other parts, it, in general, throws such a languor over them, as to conceal their beauties, and very often suppress their effect.

Diction, according to Aristotle's usual laconic, yet critical definition, is *the explication of things by words*; hence elevated sentiments require elevated language, tender sentiments, words that are soft and flowing, plaintive sentiments, humble and affecting; in short, words being intimately connected with the ideas they represent, the greatest harmony is required between them; and, as we have before observed, that the sentiments ought to be tuned to the passion, so the language should be in unison with both.

The first ideas which rise in the soul, upon its receiving the impression of some lively affection,

fection, and are commonly called sentiments, have a power of affecting us, tho' expressed in the simplest terms, because they speak the language of the heart; Emilia, therefore, affects us, when she says in the plainest words,

J'aime encore plus Cinna, que je ne hais Auguste.

I love my Cinna, more than I detest Augustus.

A sentiment would even cease to be so moving, were it expressed in magnificent terms, and with pompous figures; Othello, for instance, would not engage us so much as he does, or show us, at so short a view, the combination of past circumstances in his mind; if (when reminded by Iago, that as Desdemona deceived her father, so she might him) instead of dropping that simple, yet forcible expression, "*and so she did;*" he were to express the same sentiment in a figurative stile; affectation would then have discovered itself, after which adieu to the language of the heart.

And here one general rule will hold good in regard to diction; where characters make remarks upon their own, and the sentiments of others; where recitals and descriptions are

to be introduced; and, in short, all that is not properly sentiment, require, as much as the nature of the piece, and probability will admit of, to be represented to us by images, capable of fixing themselves in our imagination.

We except, however, from this general rule, the recitals of prodigious events made just after they have happened; 'tis likely, that an ocular witness to these events, such as ought to be employed in the narration, was struck with a surprise from which he has not yet recovered; it would be therefore, contrary to the rules of probability, for him to use such figures in his recital, as occur not to a person that is frightened, and who has no thoughts of being pathetic; besides, those prodigious events require the poet's attention to procure, as much as possible, the spectator's assent; and the most certain way of obtaining it, is to give the recital in the plainest terms, and such as are the least capable of rendering the person who speaks, liable to be suspected of exaggeration.

But as we have, in the preceding chapter, illustrated the theory of sentiments by examples, we shall pursue the same method in this, as the most eligible for perspicuity and instruction.

The first example we shall give, is an observation of Aristotle's upon Homer, when re-
pre-

presenting the terrible noise which enraged waters make ; he says, “ the rivers *roared*.” Now says Aristotle, very justly, should any one say “ the rivers *cried*,” such an alteration would change a choice and noble phrase, into one as proportionably mean and little.

Pleasant emotions which elevate, or swell the mind, should vent themselves in strong epithets and figurative expressions, but humbling and dispiriting passions affect to speak plain ; for figurative expression, being the effect of an enlivened imagination, cannot be the language of anguish, or distress. Otway, sensible of this last, has painted a scene of distress in colours, finely adapted to the subject ; there is scarce a figure in it, except a short and natural simile, with which the speech is introduced.

Belvidera, talking to her father of her husband ;

Think you saw what pass'd at our last parting ;
 Think you beheld him like a raging lion,
 Pacing the earth, and tearing up his steps,
 Fate in his eyes, and roaring with the pain
 Of burning fury ; think you saw his one hand,
 Fix'd on my throat, while the extended other
 Grasp'd a keen threatn'ing dagger ; oh ! 'twas thus
 We last embrac'd, when trembling with revenge,
 He dragg'd me to the ground, and at my bosom
 Presented horrid death ; cried out “ my friends,

Where

Where are my friends?" strove, wept, rag'd, threat'n'd,
lov'd;

For he yet lov'd, and that dear love preserved me
To this last trial of a father's pity—

Venice Preserved, Act V.

To say, in *plain terms*, that there is no great merit in gaining the affections of a man who is of an amorous disposition; but that it is a fine thing to make a person fall in love, who has never shewn any propensity towards this passion, would be only a common truth which would hardly engage our attention; but when *Racine* puts this very truth into the mouth of *Aricia*, the thought, trivial as it is, is formed by his expressions into an eloquent speech.

Pour moi, je suis plus fiere, et suis la gloire aisee
D'arracher un hommage à mille autres offert,
Et d'entrer dans un cœur de toutes parts ouvert.
Mais de faire fléchir un courage inflexible
De porte, la douleur dans une ame insensible
D'enchaîner un captif de ses fers étonné,
Contre un joug qui lui plaît vainement mutiné
Voilà ce qui me plaît, violà ce qui m'irrite.

TRANSLATION.

But I those easy conquests can despise,
To force a tribute from a vulgar breast,
Or storm a heart that's open on all sides.
But to subdue a proud obdurate mind,
To give a sense of pain to cruel souls,
To lead a captive at his chains surpris'd,
Rebelling vainly 'gainst a pleasing yoke,
This is my chief ambition, and delight.

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For a person likewise to say simply, that *Alexander was a persuasive lover*; such a character would have nothing new, or affecting in it, because it has been applicable to many, and the manner of *wording* it, leaves no considerable impression; yet Lee sublimes this thought to one of the greatest beauties of our language, in the following single line:

“ Then he would talk! — Good gods, how he would talk!”

As these few specimens will be sufficient to shew the necessary union between *sentiments* and *dition*, we shall add some examples where this union is violated.

Of diction elevated above the tone of the sentiment.

Zara. — — — Swift as occasion !
 Myself will fly; and earlier than the morn
 Wake thee to freedom. Now 'tis late; and yet
 Some news; few minutes past arriv'd, which seem'd
 To shake the temper of the king—Who knows
 What racking cares disease a monarch's bed?
 Or love, that late at night, still lights his lamp,
 And strikes his rays through dusk, and folded lids
 Forbidding rest, may stretch his eyes awake;
 And force their balls abroad at this dead hour.

Mourning Bride, Act III. Scene 4.

The commonest observer cannot but see, in this instance, that the diction is by far too pompous,

pompous and laboured, for describing so simple a circumstance as absence of sleep.

As imagery, and figurative expression are discordant in the highest degree with the agony of a mother, who is deprived of two hopeful sons by a brutal murder; therefore the following passage is a specimen of diction too light and airy for so intense a passion.

Queen. —— Ah! my poor princes! Ah my tender babes!
My unblown flowers, new appearing sweets!
If yet your gentle souls fly in the air,
And be not fix'd in doom perpetual,
Hover about me with your airy wings,
And hear your mother's lamentation.

Richard III. Act IV. Scene 4.

A thought that turns upon the expression instead of the subject, commonly called a *play of words*, is unworthy of that composition which pretends to any degree of elevation; yet Shakespeare has made this sacrifice to the age he lived in, in many instances, particularly in the following:

Laertes upon his first hearing of his sister's death.

Laertes. Alas! then she is drown'd.

Queen. Drown'd.

Laertes.

Laura. Too much of water hadst thou poor Ophelia,
And therefore I forbid my tears.

Hamlet, Act IV. Scene last.

Antony speaking of Julius Cæsar.

O world! thou wa'st the forest of this bært;
And this, indeed, O world, the heart of thee.
How like a deer, stricken by many princes,
Dost thou here lie!

Julius Cæsar, Act III. Scene 3.

But though Shakespeare has thus descended to a play of words, he has sometimes introduced it for the marking a peculiar character, as in the following passage:

King Philip. What sayst thou, boy? look in the lady's face.

Lewis. I do my lord, and in her eye I find a wonder, or a wondrous miracle.—The shadow of myself form'd in her eye; being but the shadow of your son, Becomes a sun, and makes your son a shadow. I do protest I never lov'd myself, 'Till now infix'd I beheld myself Drawn in the flattering table of her eye.

Faulconbridge. Drawn in the flattering table of her eye! Hang'd in the frowning wrinkle of her brow! And quarter'd in her heart! he doth espy Himself love's traitor, this is pity now That hang'd, and drawn, and quartered, there should be, In such a love, so vile a lout as he.

King John, Act II. Scene 5.

One should think it unnecessary to enter a caveat against expressions which have no meaning, or, at least, no distinct meaning; and

and yet somewhat of this kind may be found even amongst otherwise respectable writers. We shall give the following specimen from Dryden.

Cleopatra questioning Charmion of Antony's constancy.

Cleo. Now, what news, my Charmion ?
Will he be kind ? and will he not forsake me ?
Am I to live, or die ? nay, do I lie ?
Or am I dead ? for when he gave his answer,
Fate took the word, and then I liv'd or died.

All For Love, Act II.

But nothing can be finer ridiculed than this *last specimen*, in the following couplet of the witty Duke of Buckingham.

Wa'st not unjust to ravish hence her breath,
And in life's stead, to leave us nought but death.

Rehearsal, Act IV. Scene 1.

In short,—*diaction* cannot be better wound up than in the following short definition of it, given by Lord Kaines; to whose critical pen, we likewise hold ourselves obliged for several of the dramatic quotations in this and the preceding chapter.

“ Language may be considered as the dress of thought; and where the one is not suited to the other, we are sensible of the incongruity, in the same manner, as where a judge

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is dressed like a fop, or a peasant like a man of quality."

It will be necessary, however, before we close this subject, to say something of that species of verse which is generally held to be best suited to tragedy.

Aristotle lays it down as a rule, "that 'tis best to write tragedy in that kind of verse that is the *least* such, or which is nearest prose."

Amongst the ancients, this was the *Iambick*; with us, it is *blank verse*; but as the wits of Charles the Second's days, mostly wrote their plays in *rbyme*; and, as there are not wanting, even in our days, some advocates for this method, as well as some practitioners in it, we shall make a few general observations on it's impropriety.

It is a matter of little consequence, whether we received this manner of writing originally from our own countrymen, or the French, who practise it to this day. One thing we are sure of, that before Shakespeare's time, our ancestors all wrote in this way; or, to speak more properly, *knew no better*; but as it was reserved for this favourite child of nature, to destroy every thing which militated against his parent, so *rbyme* fell a sacrifice, in common, with the other absurdities of the drama; the authorities of Fletcher and

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Ben Jonson supported Shakespeare ; and except the short revival of it in the *rhyiming* reign of Charles II. when the muses had not, for some time, recovered themselves from the ruins of monarchy, it has ever since been justly banished our stage.

And indeed, when we consider the many objections that lie against the use of rhyme on the stage, the wonder will not be, how we came to leave it off, but how we could ever submit to it ? for, as a play is an imitation of nature, and since no man, without pre-meditation, speaks in rhyme, neither ought he to do it on the stage ; to be sure, the fancy may be there elevated to a higher pitch of thought than it is in ordinary discourse, as there is a probability, that men of excellent and quick parts, may speak noble things *extempore* ; but those thoughts are never fettered with numbers without study, and therefore, it must be unnatural to represent the most free way of speaking under that which is most constrained.

But, it is said, the quickness of repartees in argumentative scenes, receive an ornament from verse ; now, what is more unreasonable than to imagine, that a man should not only conceive the wit, but the rhyme too on a sudden ; this following of him who spoke before, both in sound and measure, is so great a happiness, that we must, at least, suppose the

the Dramatis Personæ to be born poets ; if we do not this, it will look rather like the design of two, than the answer of one ; it will appear that your actors hold intelligence together ; that they perform their tricks, like fortune-tellers, by confederacy, and that great maxim of all professions,

"Ars est celare artem"

will be entirely destroyed. It will not serve for an objection that carries any weight with it ; that a play is known to be a play, however you manage it, and consequently the dialogue of two, or more persons, understood to be the language but of one poet ; for though we know we are to be deceived, and we desire to be so, no reasonable man was ever yet deceived, but with a probability of truth ; thus we sufficiently understand, that the scenes which represent cities, and countries to us, are not really such, but only painted on boards and canvass ; but shall that excuse their want of composition and colouring ? ought they not rather to be laboured with so much the more diligence and exactness, on account of their principal use being to help the imagination, which is only to be deceived under the strongest appearances of truth ?

If rhyme is incapable of expressing the greatest thoughts naturally, the lowest it cannot without a great deal of absurdity; what is more unbefitting the majesty of verse, than to call a servant, or bid a door be shut in rhyme? there is an air of ridicule in dressing up so familiar a command in the dignity of measure, sufficient to unrealize the dialogue which follows, and make the most important circumstance appear bombastical, yet some of our greatest poets, who have written tragedies in rhyme, have been forced on this inevitable necessity.

We are sufficiently aware, however, that in condemning the practice of rhyme, we have some respectable authorities against us, and in particular Mr. Dryden, one of the greatest poets this country can boast of; but as, on the one side, the espousal of any error, let it be never so formidably supported, can never make it less so; so on the other, it is but fair to investigate what accidental causes may contribute to that support.

It is allowed, on all hands, that the great strength of Mr. Dryden's genius began to unfold itself rather late in life; in Milton's time, (when Dryden was between thirty and forty) that great man, who was acquainted with him, would never allow him to be more than

than a *happy versifier*; his writings then, though we will not say that they absolutely confirm this report, yet they, in some respect, favour it; as his best plays were written between forty and fifty, and his *Alexander's Feast*, which many call his *Chef d'Oeuvre*, at the very advanced age of between sixty and seventy; from these facts then, we may conclude, that upon his outset in the literary world, (which was about the time of the restoration) he was rather a *follower* than a *leader* of the drama; so that rhyme being the false taste of those times, and his talents lying strongly on that side, he became a practitioner from *fashion*, and was supported in it from *inclination*: when his judgement, however, matured, it is more than probable he saw his error, but his pride would not suffer him to recant, as such a recantation must be attended with the overthrow of a great number of his works; which, on the general credit of his name, were held in reputation. Hence he wrote his essay on dramatic poetry, principally to vindicate the authority of rhyme; but such is the irresistible force of truth, that even in this essay, the arguments that he has raised against it, he was not able himself to throw down; so that he became a dupe to his vanity, at a time that he endeavoured mostly to guard against it, by the involuntary force of his judgement.

C H A P. XI.

*Of the THREE UNITIES ;—ACTION, TIME,
and PLACE.*

WHEN we consider the chain of causes and effects in the material world, independent of purpose, design, or thought, we find a number of incidents, in succession, without beginning, middle, or end : every thing that happens is, in different respects, both a cause, and an effect, being the effect of what goes before, and the cause of what follows ; one incident may affect us more, another less, but all of them important, or trivial, are so many links in the universal chain ; which the mind, in viewing, cannot settle ultimately upon any one, but is carried along in the train, without any close.

But when the intellectual world is taken under view, in conjunction with the material, the scene is varied. Man acts with deliberation and choice ; he aims at some end, such as riches, conquest, patriotism, &c. he proposes means, and lays plans to attain the end proposed. Here are a number of facts, or incidents leading to the end in view ; the whole

whole connected into one chain, by the relation of causation ; in running over a series of such facts, or incidents, we cannot rest upon any one, because they are presented to us as means only, leading to some end, but we rest with satisfaction upon the ultimate event, because there, the purpose, or aim of the chief person, or persons is brought to a final conclusion. This indicates the beginning, the middle, and the end, of what Aristotle calls an entire action ; the story naturally begins with describing those circumstances, which move the distinguished person to form a plan, in order to compass some desired event : the prosecution of that plan, and the obstructions, carry the reader into the heat of action ; the middle is, properly, where the action is most involved ; and the end is, where the event is brought about, and the plan accomplished.

We have given the foregoing example of a plan crowned with success, because it affords the clearest conception of a beginning, a middle, and an end, in which consists *unity of action* ; and indeed stricter unity cannot be imagined than in that case ; but an action may have unity, or a beginning, middle, and end, without so intimate a relation of parts ; as where the catastrophe is different

from what is intended or desired, which frequently happens in our best tragedies.

If unity of action be a capital beauty in a fable, imitative of human affairs, a plurality of unconnected fables must be a capital defect. For the sake of variety, we indulge an under-plot that is connected with the principal event; but two unconnected events are a great deformity, and it lessens the deformity but very little to engage the same actors in both; in short, a play analyzed, is a chain of connected facts, of which each scene makes a link; each scene, accordingly, ought to produce some incident relative to the catastrophe, by advancing, or retarding it; a scene that produces no incident, (and for that reason may be called *barren*) ought not to be indulged, because it breaks, or at least suspends, the unity of action, and the chain would be complete without it. It will be no justification to say, that they help to display characters; it were better, like Dryden, in his *dramatis personæ*, to describe them before-hand, which would not break the chain of action; but a writer of genius has no occasion for such artifice; he can display the characters of his personages much more to the life in sentiment and action. How successfully is this done by Shakespeare, in whose

whose works there is scarcely to be found a single barren scene !

Upon the whole, it appears, that all the incidents in a dramatic fable, ought to have a mutual connection, by their common relation to the grand event ; and in this relation consists the **UNITY OF ACTION.**

How far the unities of *time* and *place* are essential, is a question of greater intricacy ; these unities were strictly observed in the Grecian and Roman theatres, and they are inculcated by the French and English critics, as essential to every dramatic composition ; in theory, these unities are also acknowledged by our best poets, tho' their practice seldom corresponds ; they are often forced to take liberties, which they pretend not to justify, against the practice of the Greeks and Romans, and against the solemn decision of their own countrymen : but, in the prosecution of this subject, we shall enquire, whether we are under a strict necessity to copy the ancients in these two unities ? and whether our critics are not guilty of a mistake, in admitting no greater latitude in time and place than was admitted in Greece and Rome.

A review of the Grecian drama, compared with our own, may, perhaps, assist us in this enquiry ;

enquiry. We have before observed, that tragedy in Greece, was derived from the hymns in praise of Bacchus, which were sung in parts by a chorus: Thespis, to relieve the singers, and, for the sake of variety, introduced one actor, whose province it was to explain historically the subject of the song, and who occasionally represented one, or other personage; Eschylus introducing a second actor, formed the dialogue, by which the performance became dramatic, and the actors were multiplied, when the subject represented made it necessary; but still the chorus, which gave a beginning to tragedy, was considered as an essential part of its constitution. The first scene generally unfolds the preliminary circumstances that lead to the grand event, and this scene is, by Aristotle, termed the *prologue*; in the second scene, where the action properly begins, the chorus is introduced, which, as originally, continues upon the stage during the whole performance; the chorus frequently mix in the dialogue, and when the dialogue happens to be suspended, the chorus, during the interval, are employed in singing. Sophocles adheres to this plan religiously; Euripides is not altogether so correct; in some of his pieces, it becomes necessary to remove the chorus; but when that unusual step is risqued, matters are so ordered,

as to make their absence but momentary, nor does the removal of the chorus interrupt the representation ; they never leave the stage of their own accord, but at the command of some principal personage, who constantly waits their return.

Thus the Grecian drama is a continued representation without any interruption, a circumstance that merits attention. A continued representation without a pause, affords no opportunity to vary the place of action, nor to prolong the time of the action beyond that of the representation ; to a representation, therefore, so confined in place, and time, the foregoing reasoning is strictly applicable ; a real, or feigned action that is brought to a conclusion, after considerable intervals of time, and frequent changes of place, cannot, accurately, be copied in a representation that admits no latitude in either ; hence it is, that the unities of *place*, and *time* were, or ought to have been strictly observed in the Grecian tragedies, which are made necessary by the very constitution of their drama ; for it is absurd to compose a tragedy that cannot be justly represented.

Those critics, therefore, who for our drama pretend to establish rules founded on the practice of the Greeks, do not see that the unities of *place* and *time*, so much vaunted

ed of, were in Greece a matter of necessity, not choice, and that if we submit to such rules, it must be from choice, not necessity ; and this will appear evident upon taking a view of the constitution of our drama, which differs widely from that of Grece, but whether, more, or less perfect, is a different point.

By dropping the chorus in our drama, an opportunity is afforded to divide the representation by intervals of time, or acts, during which the stage is totally evacuated, and the spectacle suspended ; this constitution qualifies us for subjects spread through a wide space both of time, and place ; the time supposed to pass, during the suspension of the representation, is not measured by the time of the suspension, nor is any connection formed between the box we sit in, and the place where things are supposed to be transacted in our absence ; by which means, many subjects can be justly represented in our theatres, that were excluded from antient Greece.

But this doctrine may be better illustrated by an example. Let us suppose, five historical pictures, (the history of Alexander's battles by Le Brun) each of these pictures resembles an act in one of our plays ; there must necessarily be the strictest unity of place, and time,

time, in each picture, and the same necessity requires these two unities during each act of a play, because during an act, there is no interruption in the spectacle; now when we view in succession, such a number of pictures, we have no difficulty to conceive that months, or years, have passed between the events exhibited in two different pictures, though the interruption is imperceptible in passing our eye from the one to the other, and we have as little difficulty to conceive a change of place, however great; in which view, there is truly no difference between five acts of a modern play, and five such pictures.

When the representation is suspended, we can, with the greatest facility suppose any length of time, or any change of place; the spectator it is true, may be conscious, that the real time, and place, are not the same, with what are employed in the representation; but this is a work of reflection, and by the same line, he may also be conscious that Garrick is not king Lear, that the play-house is not Dover Cliffs, nor the noise he hears thunder, and lightning; in a word, after an interruption of representation, it is not more difficult for a spectator to imagine a new place, or a different time, than at the commencement of the play to imagine himself

self at Rome, or in a period of time, two thousand years back ; and indeed it must appear ridiculous that a critic, who is willing to hold candle-light for sun-shine, and some painted canvasses for a palace, should affect so much difficulty in imagining a latitude of *place*, or *time*, beyond what is necessary in the representation.

There are we acknowledge, some effects of great latitude in time that ought never to be indulged in a composition for the theatre ; nothing can be more absurd, than at the end of the play to exhibit a full grown person, who appears a child at the beginning ; the mind rejects, as contrary to all probability, such a latitude of time ; the greatest change from place to place, cannot have the same bad effect, in the bulk of human affairs, place is not so very material, as the mind when occupied with any interesting event, is little attentive to minute circumstances, because they scarcely make any impression.

But though we have thus taken arms to rescue some of our best poets from the despotism of antient critics, we would not be understood to justify liberty without any reserve. An unbounded licence with relation to *place*, and *time*, is faulty for a reason that seems to be overlooked ; that it seldom fails to break in upon the *unity of action*. In
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the ordinary course of human affairs, single events, such as are fit to be represented on the stage, are confined to a narrow spot, and generally employ no great extent of time, we accordingly, seldom find strict unity of action in a dramatic composition, where any remarkable latitude is indulged in these particulars; we must say, further, that a composition which employs but one place, and requires not a greater length of time, than is necessary for the representation, is so much the more perfect, because the confining an event within so narrow bounds, contributes to the unity of action, and also prevents that labour, however slight, which the mind must undergo, in imagining frequent changes of place, and many intervals of time: but still we must be so far an advocate for the moderns, that such limitation of time, and place, as was necessary in the Grecian drama, is no guide to us, and therefore, though it may add, in *point of rule*, one beauty more to the composition, it is at best but a refinement, which may justly give place to a thousand beauties more substantial; and we may add, that it is extremely difficult (if not impracticable) to contract within the Grecian limits, any fable so fruitful of incidents in number, and variety, as to give full scope to the fluctuation of passion.

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It may now appear, that critics who put the unities of *place*, and *time*, upon the same footing with the *unity of action*, making them all equally essential, have not attended to the nature, and constitution of the modern drama; if they admit an interrupted representation, with which no writer finds fault, it is plainly absurd to condemn its greatest advantage, that of representing many interesting subjects excluded from the Greek stage; if there needs must be a reformation, why not restore the ancient chorus, and the ancient continuity of action? There is certainly no medium, for to admit an interruption without relaxing from the strict unities of *place*, and *time*, is, in effect, to load us with all the inconveniences of the ancient drama, and, at the same time, to withhold from us its advantages.

The question therefore comes for this; whether our model be an improvement, or not? And in order to a comparative trial, some particulars must be premised. When a play begins, we have no difficulty to adjust our imagination to the scene of action, however distant it be in time, or in place; because we know that the play is a representation only; our situation is very different after we are engaged; it is the perfection of representation to hide itself; to impose upon the

the spectator, and to produce in him an impression of reality; but any interruption annihilates that impression, by rousing him out of his waking dream, and unhappily restoring him to his senses; so difficult it is to support the impression of reality, that much slighter interruptions than the interval between two acts are sufficient to dissolve the charm, in the fifth act of the Mourning Bride, the three first scenes are in a room of state, the fourth in a prison, and the change is only operated by the shifting a scene, but however quick the transition may be, it is impracticable to impose upon the spectators, so as to make them conceive that they are actually carried from the palace to the prison; they immediately recollect that both are imaginary, and the whole a fiction.

From these premises one will be naturally led, at first view, to pronounce the frequent interruptions in the modern drama to be an imperfection; it will occur, "That every interruption must have the effect to banish the dream of reality, and with it to banish our concern, which cannot subsist while we are conscious that all is a fiction; and therefore, that in the modern drama, sufficient time is not afforded for fluctuation, and swelling of passion, like what is afforded in that

of Greece, where there is no interruption." This reasoning it must be owned, has a specious appearance 'till we examine it with closer attention.

In looking narrowly into the antient drama, we find that though the representation is never interrupted; the principal action is suspended not less frequently than in the modern drama; the only difference is, that, in the former, when the action is suspended, as it is at the end of every act, opportunity is taken of the interval, to employ the chorus in singing; hence it appears, that the Grecian continuity of representation cannot have the effect to prolong the impression of reality; to banish that impression, a suspension of the action, whilst the chorus is employed in singing, is no less operative than a total suspension of the representation.

But to open a larger view of this question, it will not be very difficult to shew, that a continued representation, without a single pause even in the principal action, so far from an advantage, would be an imperfection; and that a representation, with proper pauses, is better qualified for moving the audience, and giving livelier impressions. This will be more evident from the following considerations.

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Representation cannot very long support an impression of reality; for when the spirits are exhausted by close attention, and by the agitation of passion, an uneasiness ensues, which never fails to banish the waking dream. Now supposing, that an act requires as much time as can be employed, with strict attention, upon any incident, (a supposition that cannot be far from truth) it follows, that the impression of reality would not be prolonged beyond the time of an act, even supposing a continued representation; if so, a continued representation of longer endurance than an act, instead of giving a scope to the swell of the passions, would over-strain the attention, and produce a total absence of mind. In this respect, the four pauses have a fine effect; for by affording to the audience a seasonable respite, when the impression of reality is gone, they relieve the mind from its fatigue, and consequently prevent a wandering of thought, possibly at the very time of the most interesting scenes.

In one article, indeed, it must be confessed, the Grecian model has greatly the advantage; its chotus, during an interval, not only preserves alive the impression made upon the audience, but also prepares their hearts for successive impressions; in our theatres, on the contrary, the audience, at the end of every act, carried away by a jig of Vivaldi's, or

a concerto of Giardini's, lose every warm impression relative to the piece, and begin again cool and unconcerned, as at the commencement of the representation. This we have long thought a gross defect, but luckily not incurable; to revive the Grecian chorus, would be to revive the Grecian slavery of place and time; but may we not figure a detached chorus, coinciding with a pause in the representation, as the antient chorus did with, a pause in the principal action? What objection, for example, can there lie against music between the acts, vocal and instrumental, *adapted to the subject?* Such detached chorus, without putting us under any limitation of time and place, would recruit the spirits, and preserve entire the tone, if not the tide of passion. The music, after an act, should commence in the tone of the preceding passion, and be gradually varied till it accord with the tone of the passion that is to succeed in the next act; the music and the representation would both of them be gainers by this conjunction, which will thus appear: music that accords with the present tone of mind is, upon that account doubly agreeable; and accordingly, though music singly may not have power to raise so strong a passion as tragic sentiments, yet it tends greatly to support a passion already raised; further,

it prepares us for the passion that follows, by inspiring cheerful, tender, melancholy, or animated impressions as the subject requires; take for example, the opening of the *Mourning Bride*, how sympathetically are we prepared for Almezia's distresses by the soft music which precedes and accompanies the drawing up of the curtain?

Thus music and representation support each other powerfully, the impression made upon the audience by the representation, is a fine preparation for the music that succeeds; and the impression made by the music, is equally so for the representation which follows; it appears to us, therefore, fully evident, that by some such contrivance, the modern drama may be improved, so as to enjoy the advantages of the ancient chorus, without its rigid (we had almost said *slavish*) limitation of *time*, and *place*, and musical composers for the stage, would be reduced to the happy necessity of studying, and imitating nature, instead of deviating, according to the present mode, into wild and ungovernable conceits.

But to return more closely to the subject. The numberless improprieties forced upon the Greek dramatic poets by the constitution of their drama, are, of themselves, we should think, a sufficient reason for preferring that

of the moderns, even abstracted from the improvement proposed ; to prepare the reader for this article, it must be premised, that as in the antient drama, the place of action never varies, a place necessary must be chosen, to which every person may have access without any improbability ; this confines the scene to some open place, generally the court, or area before a palace, which excludes from the Grecian theatre transactions within doors, though these commonly are the most important.

Such a cruel restraint is, of itself, sufficient to cramp the most pregnant invention, and accordingly the Grecian writers, in order to preserve unity of place, are reduced to the greatest improprieties ; in the Hippolytus of Euripides *, Phædra, distressed in mind and body, is carried without any pretext from her palace, to the place of action ; she is there laid upon a couch, unable to support herself, and made to utter many things improper to be heard by a number of women who form the chorus ; what is still worse, her female attendant uses the strongest intreaties to make her reveal the secret cause of her anguish ; which at last Phædra, contrary to decency and probability, is prevailed upon to do in presence of that very chorus †.

Alcestes,

* A& 1st, Scene 6th.

† A& 2d, Scene 2d.

Alcestes, in Euripides, at the point of death, is brought from the palace to the place of action, groaning and lamenting her untimely fate *. In the *Trachiniens* of Sophocles †, a secret is imparted to Dejanira, the wife of Hercules, in presence of the chorus. In the tragedy of *Iphigenia*, the messenger employed to inform Clytemnestra, that Iphigenia was sacrificed, stops short at the place of action, and with a loud voice, calls the queen from her palace to hear the news. Again, in the *Iphigenia in Tauris*, the necessary presence of the chorus forces Euripides into a gross absurdity, which is to form a secret in their hearing ; and to disguise the absurdity, much courtship is bestowed on the chorus, not one woman, but a number, to engage them to secrecy. In the *Medea* of Euripides likewise, that princess makes no difficulty, in presence of the chorus, to plot the death of her husband, his mistress, and her own father, the king of Corinth, all by poison ; it was necessary to bring Medea upon the stage, and there is but one place of action, which is always occupied by the chorus ; this scene closes the second act ; and, in the end of the third, she frankly makes the chorus her confidants, in plotting the murder of her own children. Terence too, by identity of place, is often forced to make a

conversation within doors loud enough for the open street; insomuch that the cries of a woman in labour, are heard there distinctly.

The Grecian poets are not more happy in respect to time, than to place: In the *Hippolytus* of Euripides, that prince is banished at the end of the fourth act; and in the first scene of the following act, a messenger relates to Theseus the whole particulars of the death of Hippolytus by the sea monster; that remarkable event must have employed many hours; and yet, in the representation, it is confined to the time employed by the chorus, upon the song at the end of the 4th act; this inconsistency is still greater in the *Iphigenia in Tauris*, in the 5th act, scene 4th, as the song could not exhaust half an hour, and yet the incidents, supposed to have happened during that time, could not naturally be transacted in less than half a day.

The antients are forced, not less frequently to transgress another rule, derived also from a continued representation, which is, that as a vacuum, however momentary, interrupts the representation; it is necessary the place of action be constantly occupied. Sophocles, in respect to this rule, as well as to others, is generally correct; but Euripides cannot bear such restraint; he often evacuates the stage, and leaves it empty for others in succession.

Iphigenia

Iphigenia in Tauris, after pronouncing a soliloquy in the first scene, leaves the place of action, and is succeeded by Orestes and Pyrades; they, after some conversation, walk off, and Iphigenia re-enters, accompanied with the chorus; in the *Alcestes*, which is of the same author, the place of action is likewise void, at the end of the third act. It is true, to cover the irregularity, and to preserve the representation in motion, Euripides is extremely careful to fill the stage without loss of time; but this is still an interruption, and a link of the chain broken; for, during the change of the actors, there must be a space of time, during which, the stage is occupied by neither set; it makes, indeed, a more remarkable interruption, to change the place of action, as well as the actors, but this was not practicable upon the Grecian stage.

It is hard to say, upon what model Terence has formed his plays. Having no chorus, there is a cessation of the representation at the end of every act, but advantage is not taken of the cessation, even to vary the place of action; for the street is always chosen, where every thing passing may be seen by every person, and by that choice, the most sprightly and interesting parts of the action, which commonly pass within doors, are excluded; as in the last act of the *Eunuch*, where he has sub-

mitted to the like restrictions in point of time; in a word, a play with a regular chorus, is not more confined in place and time than his plays are. Thus a zealous sectary follows implicitly ancient forms and ceremonies, without once considering whether their introductory cause be still subsisting. Plautus, so far of a bolder genius than Terence, makes good use of the liberty afforded by an interrupted representation; he varies the place of action upon all occasions, when the relation suits his purpose.

In this short analysis of the ancient drama, be it understood, we plead for no change of place in our plays, but after an interval; nor for any latitude, in point of time, but what falls in with an interval. The unities of place and time ought to be strictly observed *during each act*; for, during the representation, there is no opportunity for the smallest deviation from either; hence it is an *essential* requisite, that during *each act*, the stage be always occupied, for even a momentary *vacuum* makes an interruption.

Another rule is not less essential; it would be a gross breach of the unity of action, to exhibit upon the stage two separate actions at the same time, and therefore, to preserve that unity, it is necessary, that each personage introduced, during an act, be linked to those

in possession of the stage, so as to join all in one action; these things follow, from the very conception of an act, which admits not the slightest interruption; the moment the representation is intermitted, there is an end of that act, and we have no other notion of a new act, but where, after a pause, or interval, the representation is again put in motion. French writers, generally speaking, are correct in this particular. English writers do not pay, by any means, so close an attention. Actors not only succeed each other in the same place without connection; but what is still worse, they frequently succeed each other in different places. This change of place in the same act, ought never to be indulged; for beside breaking the unity, it has a disagreeable effect in marring the illusion, which is principally held up by continuity of place.

C H A P. XII.

*Of some Inferior Rules proper to be observed
in Tragedy.*

HAVING gone through all the very essential parts of tragedy, we come now to speak of some other rules, which though not so fundamentally conducive to its formation, yet highly necessary to give a polish to those parts, as well as to produce that *stage effect*, which should so much engage every dramatic poet's attention.

We have already observed in treating of the fable of tragedy, that it cannot be extended to more than *five acts*, if we would concur with either ancient, or modern customs; the scenes, we have likewise said, should be *single* during each act, but the exact quantity of poetical lines is undetermined, and indeed very justly, as such a restraint would be fettering genius too rigidly; however, by judging from those which compose our best pieces, they are generally found to run from three to four hundred.

Another rule which we have from Horace.

— *Nec quarta loqui persona laboret*

should

should be almost universally attended to, as it requires but common observation to find out that *four* people, or more, speaking on the stage in one group, (whether from the difficulty of a poet's supporting so many different characters in dialogue, or from an inattention in the spectator which this extent of conversation produces)—give not so much satisfaction, as when the dialogue is confined to *two*, or *three*; we then come to be closer judges of their characters, are more interested and more readily find out the merit, or demerit of the poet; this rule, however just in general, should not be attended to so strictly as *never* to depart from it. The ~~catastrophe~~ is very often a situation which admits of this infringement; as it may be necessary to have many things then explained by the persons themselves, which could not be done so well by another; however, even in this case, we would recommend this licence to be used sparingly, and only where the plot is better elucidated with it than without it.

In expressing whatever passion we would chuse to represent, their effects should always appear in the concernment of an audience; but this can never be done where speeches are turned into declamations, which tire us with their length, and instead of persuading

us

us to grieve for their imaginary heroes, rather represent them in the light of tedious visitors, who we are in pain for till they are gone.

When the French stage came to be reformed by Cardinal Richlieu, those long harangues were introduced, to comply with the gravity of a church-man, and from thence it is, perhaps, we have copied this defect; but surely if a play, in all its parts, would give us a true picture of human nature, short speeches and replies, are more apt to move the passions than the other; it is unnatural for any one, in a gust of passion, to speak long together, or for another in the same condition, to suffer him without interruption; grief and passion, are like floods raised in little brooks by a sudden rain; they are quickly up, and if the concernment be pealed unexpectedly upon us, it overflows us; but a long sober shower gives them leisure to run out as they came in, without troubling, or swelling the ordinary current.

But tho' all passions may be lively represented on the stage, if to the well writing of them the actor supplies a good commanding voice, and limbs gracefully disposed; yet there are many things which can never be imitated to a just height; dying for instance, is an action which none but a

Roman

Roman Gladiator could naturally exhibit on the stage, when he did not imitate, but actually perform it ; therefore, 'tis better to omit the representation.

As a poet in the description of a beautiful flower-garden, will often please our imagination more than even the place itself ; so lively and affecting descriptions of death, seconded by all the pathos of acting, insinuate a greater opinion of reality into our imaginations, than if the actor was really to die before us. When we see death thus represented, we are convinced it is but fiction ; but when we hear it well related, our eyes (the strongest witnesses) are wanting, which might have undeceived us ; and we are willing to favour the sleight, when the poet does not too grossly impose upon us. They therefore, who imagine these relations would make no concernment in the audience, are deceived, by confounding them with others which are antecedent to the play ; the latter are often made in cold blood to the audience, but these are warmed with our own concernments which were before awakened in the course of the play.

What the philosophers say of motion, that when it is once begun, it continues of itself, and will do so to eternity, without some stop put to it, is clearly true on this occasion ;

occasion ; the soul being already moved with the characters and fortunes of those imaginary persons, continues going, of its own accord, and we are no more weary to hear what becomes of them, when they are not on the stage, than we are to listen to the news of an absent mistress. But it may be objected, that if one part of the play may be related, why not all ? we answer, some parts of the action are more fit to be represented, some to be related. Corneille says judiciously, that the poet is not obliged to expose to view all particular actions which conduce to the principal ; he ought to select such of them to be seen, which will appear with the greatest beauty, either by the magnificence of the show, the vehemence of passions which they produce, or some other charm, and let the rest arrive to the audience by narration.

But how does our stage in general observe this decorum ? Those actions which should be supposed to be done behind the scenes, are all dragged forward to the notice of the audience, and in opposition to that maxim of Horace,

“ *Nec pueros coram populo Medea trucidet.*”

Duels, battles, and murders, transform our theatres to the stages of prize-fighters, and Gladiators ;

Gladiators; the mode of conducting them is also as ridiculous as the intent; for what can be more absurd than to represent an army of twenty, or thirty thousand men, by a few awkward scene-shifters, dressed up in red coats, pushed on by as many more; or a duel fought, and one of the parties slain with two, or three thrusts of a foil, which we know is so blunted as to require an hour to kill in good earnest with? Indeed the testimony the audience ever bear to such fights, notwithstanding the force of habit, prove them to be unnatural; as a *battle*, *duel*, or *death of an hero*, seldom, or never fail to dissolve the strongest theatrical illusion, and wipe away all its sympathetic effects with a laugh.

In short, it should be one general rule in a poet, that all those actions, which by reason of their cruelty will cause aversion in us, or by reason of their impossibility, incredibility, &c. should be either wholly avoided, or delivered by narration; and that he will be justified in this practice, both by the best of the ancient, and modern writers, we shall shut up this chapter with some examples. In the Eunuch of Terence, Pythias, makes a relation of what had happened within at the soldier's entertainment; the relation likewise of Sejanus's death, and the prodigies before

before it, are both very remarkable; the one of which was hid from sight to avoid the horror and tumult of the representation; the other to shun the introduction of things impossible to be believed. Ben Jonson follows Terence in his *Magnetic Lady*, where he makes one come out from dinner, to relate the quarrels, and disorders of it, to save the indecent figure such a view would have on the stage, as well as to abbreviate the story. Fletcher, in his excellent play, "The King, and no King," goes yet farther, for the whole unravelling of the plot is done by narration in the fifth act, after the manner of the antients, and it has a very proper effect upon the audience, tho' it be only a relation of what was done many years before the play. Aaron Hill in his *Merope*, adds another instance to these, where the Revolution, which sets the lawful heir on the throne by the murder of the tyrant at the altar, is all effected by narration, and in such a manner, as gives a stronger impression than the representation of it possibly could. We could multiply these instances out of number, but these, we hope, are sufficient to prove, that there is no error in chusing a subject which requires this sort of narrations; in the ill management of it, doubtless, there may.

CHAP. XIII.

Of Tragic Subjects affecting us more than those of Comedy.

WHOSOEVER reflects that tragedy has a much stronger power of affecting a great part of mankind than comedy, will easily conclude from hence, that their imitations are no further interesting than in proportion to the greater, or lesser impression, which the object imitated would have made upon us. Now, it is certain, that men in general, are not so much moved with theatrical action during the representation of a comedy as that of a tragedy ; those whose studies, or amusements, lead them to the dramatic walk, talk more frequently, and with more warmth of the tragedies than of the comedies they have seen represented ; and consequently have the former more in quotation than the latter ; in short, we are readier to excuse a mediocrity in the tragic than the comic stile, though the latter seems not to have the same command over our attention as the first.

Those whose labours are designed for the stage, talk in the same strain, and mostly agree, that there is not so much danger in giving the public an entertainment to weep at, as to divert them with laughing.

One would imagine, nevertheless, that comedy ought to draw mens attentions more than tragedy. A comic poet does not exhibit to the spectators heroic characters, or such as they have no knowledge of, but from some vague ideas formed from the relation of historians; he does not entertain the pit with conspiracies against the state, with oracles and other marvellous events, and such as the greatest part of the spectators, who have never had any share in the like adventures, would not be able to tell, whether the circumstances and consequences thereof are set forth with any resemblance of truth. On the contrary, the entertains us with the picture of our friends, and of those with whom we have a constant intercourse and familiarity. The theatre, according to Plato, subsists, as it were, entirely by the errors and foibles which are daily incident to men, by reason of their not being sufficiently acquainted with themselves; some imagining themselves more powerful than they really are;

ate; some more knowing, and others, in fine, more amiable.

The tragic poet exposes the inconveniences arising from the want of self-knowledge in sovereigns, and other independent persons, the consequences of whose vindictive temper make generally a great noise; whose resentments are naturally violent, and whose passions, proper for the stage, are capable of bearing the springs of the greatest events. The comic poet exhibits the consequences of self-ignorance among the general ranks of people, whose resentments are subordinate to the laws, and whose passions, proper for the scenes, are productive only of domestic broils and ordinary adventures.

The comic poet entertains us, therefore, with the adventures of our equals, and presents us with the portraits of originals that are constantly before us; he makes even the pit (allowing the expression) mount upon the stage. Man, therefore, who is naturally fond of any discovery he can make of his neighbour's foibles, and desirous of all knowledge that can entitle him to lessen his esteem of others, ought naturally to resort to *Thalia*, rather than *Melpomene*, especially as the former is much more fertile than the latter of lessons for private peoples instructions.

Tho' comedy may not, perhaps, correct all

the failings it exposes, yet it teaches us at least, how to live with such as are subject to those failings, and how to conform so in company, as to avoid that roughness which provokes them, or that servility which flatters them. Tragedy, on the contrary, represents heroes, with whom our situation forbids us to attempt any resemblance, and whose lessons and examples are drawn from events so dissimilar to those we are commonly exposed to, that the applications which we might be willing to make, would be extremely vague and imperfect; hence, as it is the imitation of the crimes and misfortunes of great men, so likewise it is the imitation of the sublimest virtues of which they are capable.

The tragic poet exhibits men, who are captives to the most extravagant passions, and the most tumultuous agitations. He shews us a sort of unjust, but all-powerful deities, who demand a young innocent princess to be sacrificed at the foot of their altars; he sets before us the progress of heroes, the deaths of tyrants, and the revolution of empires; 'tis true, we never find our friend in any of the tragic personages; but their passions are more impetuous, and as the laws are but a feeble barrier to these passions, they are attended with much greater consequences than those of comic characters; thus

thus the *terror* and *pity*, which the picture of tragical events excites in our souls, engages much more than all the laughter and contempt excited by the several incidents of comedy.

C H A P. XIV.

Of TRAGI-COMEDY.

TRAGI-COMEDY is a kind of mixed dramatic piece, partly partaking of tragedy, and partly of comedy, and is the only species of the latter, where kings and heroes are introduced. The antients knew nothing of this composition ; their taste was superior to it ; yet so much was this style of writing in fashion with us, in the latter end of the last century, that scarce a tragedy ventured to make its appearance without a spice of comedy, or rather farce, to make the people laugh. The only excuse we can offer for the use of this extraordinary dramatic entertainment, was the then political situation of affairs, which asked for every thing, no matter how absurd, to laugh away the gloom of fanaticism, and put down the starchness of hypocrisy.

But, in getting rid of this gloom and moroseness of manners, it happened, as it often does in similar circumstances, our ancestors went too far in the contrary extreme ; they were resolved, at all events, to have the laugh on their side, and therefore, would rather encourage

courage a breach of morality, or good sense, on this account, than be without it; but what were the consequences? some of the finest poets of that day fell in with this depravity, and instead of following the line of their own genius, which would have led them to despise this unnatural farrago, they adopted it as the most profitable, as well as the most likely to meet with public countenance. Amongst this group, the *pathetic* *Orway* is unhappily distinguished; that elegant painter of the human passions, has left behind him a tragi-comedy* on this plan, which is more a satire on the age he lived in, than on his own talents, as every body must at once see, that the comic part either could not be the production of the same pen, which animated so powerfully the tragic scenes, or, that if it was, it must have been *wrong* from him, in the hour of necessity, to please the great, and little vulgar of the day.

But to speak more critically on this subject. One of the great requisites both of tragedy and comedy, is *unity* of action; now, in a tragi-comedy, there are *two* distinct actions carrying on together, to the perplexity of the audience, who, before they are well engaged in the concerns of one part, are diverted

* Venice Preserv'd.

diverted to another, and by those means, espouse the interest of neither: from hence likewise arises another inconvenience equally as absurd, which is, that one half of the characters of the play are not known to each other; they keep their distances like the *Montagues* and *Capulets*, and seldom begin an acquaintance till the last scene of the fifth act, when they all meet upon the stage to wind up their own stories.

In short, the very basis of this species of the drama, is egregiously unnatural; for, as Aristotle has justly laid down *compassion* to be one of the great springs of tragedy, how incompatible is *mirth*, or, more commonly *low humour*, with so refined and exalted a sensation? and, is it not evident, that the poet must destroy the former, by mixing it with the latter? He that would attempt to make us *laugh* and *cry*, in common conversation, we should justly hold a *ridiculous* character, for endeavouring at contrary emotions, which the heart can never feel at the same time, every thing that disposes it for the one, indisposing it for the other.

We are happy, however, in treating of this subject, that we are now but speaking of its *manes*; tragi-comedy having left this country (where, we are afraid, it was originally

ginally hatched} above half a century ago ;
for declining, as the present state of the stage
is ; our taste has, as *yet*, purity enough to reject
this seduction with universal contempt ; and
we hope, for the credit of posterity, no suc-
ceeding age will relapse into a species of the
drama, at once so repugnant to all the laws
of art as well as nature.

C H A P.

C H A P. XV.

Of the Origin, and Progress of ANCIENT COMEDY.

THE origin of comedy is as obscure as that of tragedy; they had both their original, from the festivals of the Vintage, and were not distinguished from one another, but by a burlesque, or serious chorus. But if we give these words a stricter sense, according to the notion which has been since formed, comedy was produced after tragedy, and was, in many respects, a sequel, and imitation of the works of Eschylus; it is in reality nothing more than an action set before the sight, by the same artifice of representation, materially differing in nothing but the object, which is *ridicule*.

Aristotle informs us, that Homer wrote a comic epic poem, called *Margites*, which, to the no small detriment of succeeding ages, is lost; to this poem he supposes comedy owes its birth, as does tragedy from the *Iliad* of the same author. Thus the design, and artifice of comedy were drawn from Homer, and Eschylus. This will appear less surprising; since our ideas are always gradual, and arts are seldom invented but by progressive but

imitation; the first idea contains the seed of the second, the second expanding itself gives birth to a third, and so on. Such is the progress of the human mind! it proceeds in its productions, step by step, in the same manner as nature multiplies her works, by repetitions only of her own acts, when she seems most to run into variety.

Who was the happy author of that imitation, however, is a question of more doubt; whether only one like Eschylus of tragedy, or whether there were several? Horace only quotes three writers, who had reputation in the old comedy; Eupolis, Cratinus, and Aristophanes; of whom, he says, "That they, and others, who wrote in the same way, reprehended the faults of particular persons with excessive liberty." These are probably the poets of the greatest reputation, though they were not the first, and we know the names of many others.

Amongst these three, we may be sure that Aristophanes had the greatest character, not only on account of the number of eulogiums bestowed on him, both by his own countrymen and others, but likewise, because he is the only writer of whom any comedies have made their way down to us through the confusion of times; there are not indeed any proofs that he was the inventor of comedy,

comedy, but there are that he had contributed, more than any other, to bring comedy to the perfection in which he left it. We shall therefore not enquire further, whether regular comedy was the work of a single mind, which seems yet to be unsettled, or of several cotemporaries, such as these which Horace quotes ? but distinguish the *three forms* which comedy wore in her progress towards perfection.

That comedy which Horace calls the ancient, and which according to his account, was after Eschylus, retained something of its original state, and of the licentiousness which it practised, whilst it was yet without regularity, and uttered loose jokes and abuse upon the passers by from the cart of Thespis. Though it was now properly modelled, as might have been worthy of a great theatre, and a numerous audience, and deserved the name of a regular comedy; it was not yet much nearer to decency; it was a representation of real actions, and exhibited the dress, the motions, and the air (as far as could be done in a mask) of any one who was thought proper to be sacrificed to public scorn.

In a city so free (or to come nearer the truth so *licentious*) as Athens was at that time, and in this particular, no body was spared;

spared ; not even the chief magistrate's, nor the very judges by whose voice comedians were allowed, or prohibited ; the insolence of these performances reached at last to open impiety, and sport was made equally with men and gods. These are the features by which the greatest part of the compositions of Aristophanes will be known, which, however remarkable for conveying to us the wit, and humour of that day, will at the same time be chargeable with the abandoned infamy of sacrificing one of the greatest, and wisest men * not only of Greece, but of any age, or nation whatever.

This licentiousness of the poets was however at last restrained by a law, which gave birth to what is called the *middle comedy* ; for the government, which was before shared by all the inhabitants, being now confined to a settled number of citizens, it was ordered, that no man's name should be mentioned on the stage : but poetical malignity was not long in finding the secret of defeating the purpose of this law, and of making itself ample compensation for the restraint, by inventing false names. The poets set themselves, therefore, to work upon known and real characters, so that now they had

* Socrates.

had the advantage of giving a more exquisite gratification to their vanity, and the malice of spectators. One had the refined pleasure of setting others to guess, and the other that of guessing right, by naming the masks. When pictures are so like the originals, that the names are not wanted, no body inscribes them. The consequence of this law, therefore, was nothing more than to make that done with delicacy, which before was done grossly; and the art, which was expected, would be confined within the limits of duty, was still transgressed, but with more ingenuity.

The new comedy, or that which followed, was a refinement which gave the last polish to this art; for the magistrates, who as they, before, forbade the use of real names, now forbade real subjects, and the train of chorusses too much given to abuse; so that the poets saw themselves reduced to the necessity of bringing imaginary names, and subjects upon the stage, which at once purified and enriched the theatre. Hence comedy from that time, was no longer a fury armed with torches and firebrands, denouncing personalities, and partial invectives, but a pleasing, innocent, and instructive mirror of human life.

To the polished genius of Menander, the Greeks principally were indebted for this refine-

refinement; and tho' none of his works have come down to the present day, it is to him, Plautus and Terence, and from them us moderns, are indebted for the standard of comic writing; surely we are authorised to say so, on the best grounds, when Cesar only called Terence, whose works sufficiently proclaim him an equal master of the elegant, and humorous, "*one half of Menander*;" indeed all the poets both of his own country, and of the Latins, conspire in giving him the highest eulogiums; but as Plutarch has drawn the comparison more closely between him and Aristophanes, (the only competitor he had) we shall make no apology for giving it in this place.

" He objects to Aristophanes, that he carries all his thoughts beyond nature, that he writes rather to the crowd, than to men of character, that he affects a style obscure, and licentious, tragical, pompous, and mean, sometimes serious, and sometimes ludicrous, that he makes none of his personages speak according to any distinct character, so that in his scenes, the son cannot be known from the father, the citizen from the boor, the hero from the shop-keeper, and the divine from the serving man; whereas the diction of Menander, which is always uniform and pure, is very justly adapted

ed to different characters, rising when it is necessary to vigorous, and sprightly comedy, yet without transgressing the proper limits, or losing sight of nature, in which he has attained to a perfection which no other writer before him arrived ; for what man, besides himself, ever found out the art of making a diction equally suitable to women, and children, old, and young, divinities, and heroes, which like a current of clear water running through banks differently turned, complies with its course without changing any thing of its nature, or purity ?”

To omit nothing essential, which concerns this part, we shall extend the view of antient comedy a little further, by giving a short account of its progress amongst the Romans. When the arts passed from Greece to Rome, comedy took its turn amongst the rest, but the Romans applied themselves only to the new species without chorus, or personal abuse ; though, perhaps, they might have played some translations of the old, or middle comedy ; as Pliny gives an account of one which was represented in his time. The Roman comedy, which was modelled upon the last species of the Greek, hath nevertheless its different ages, according as its authors were rough, or polished ; the pieces of Livius

Andronicus

Andronicus * more antient, and less refined than those of the writers who learned the art from him, may be said to compose the first age; to him we must join Nevius his contemporary, and Ennius, who lived some years after him. The second age, comprises Pacuvius, Cecilius, and Accius. The third and highest age of its perfection, and which may properly be called the new comedy, claims Plautus, and Terence, of the last of whom it is universally agreed, he was the faithful copier of Menander.

But the Romans without troubling themselves with this order of succession, distinguished their comedies by the dresses of the players. The Robe called *Prætexta*, with large borders of purple, being the formal dress of magistrates in their dignity; the actors, who had this dress, gave its name to the comedy: the second species, introduced the senators not in great offices, but as private men; this was called *Togæ* from *Togata*: the last species, was named *Tabernaria* from the *Tunic*, or common dress of the people, or rather from the mean houses which were painted on the scene. To say the truth, these are but trifling distinctions, as comedy may be more usefully, and judiciously distinguished by the general nature of its subjects. As

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* The year of Rome 514.

to the Romans, whether they had, or had not reason for these names, they have left us so little upon the subject which is come down to us, that we need not trouble ourselves with a distinction which affords us no solid satisfaction. Plautus, and Terence, are the only authors of whom we are in possession, and as they give us a fuller notion of the real nature of their comedy, we must refer for further particulars to their works at large, concluding this chapter on antient comedy, with a short character of these poets as drawn by father Rapin.

“ With respect to the two Latin comic poets, Plautus is ingenious in his designs, happy in his conceptions, and fruitful of invention ; he has, however, according to Horace, some low jocularities, and these smart sayings which made the vulgar laugh, made him be pitied by men of higher taste ; it is true, some of his jests are extremely good, but others likewise are very bad ; to this every man’s exposed, who is too much determined to make sallies of merriment, who endeavours to raise that laughter by hyperboles, which would not arise by a just representation of things. Plautus is not quite so regular as Terence in the scheme of his designs, or in the distribution of his acts, but he is more simple in his plots ; for the fables of Terence are commonly

ly complex, as may be seen in his *Andrea*, which contains two amours. It was imputed as a fault to Terence, that to bring more action upon the stage, he made one Latin comedy out of two Greek, but then Terence unravels his plot more naturally than Plautus, which Plautus did more naturally than Aristophanes; and though Cæsar calls Terence but “one half of Menander,” because, though he had softness, and delicacy, there was in him some want of sprightliness and strength; yet he has written in a manner, so natural, and so judicious, that though he was then only a copy, he is now an original.”

C H A P. XVI.

Of the Laws of Comedy.

COMEDY, according to Aristotle, is defined to be “ an imitation of the worst men ; when I say *worst* (says that great philosopher) I don’t mean in all sorts of vices, but *only* in *ridicule*, which is properly a deformity without pain, and which never contributes to the destruction of the subject in which it is.” This definition of Aristotle’s is corroborated by Horace, Quintilian, Boileau, Mulgrave, and the long line of illustrious authors, who have ever written on this subject ; its *manners*, *sentiments*, and *iction*, are governed by the same laws as those of tragedy, that is, the first should be *good*, or suitable to the characters, and the two last correspondent to the first. In the choice of subjects, and where these scenes are to be placed, however, there is a material difference between those of tragedy and comedy. In the first, we have already pointed out who are in general the proper heroes, as well as that tragic poets should place their scenes in times remote from those we live in ; reasons of an opposite nature,

demand that the scenes of comedy ought to be fixt in the very places, and times, in which they are represented.

Comedy has no occasion to raise its favourite personages on pedestals; since its principal end is not to make us admire them, in order to render them more easily the objects of pity; the most it aims at, is to give us a little uneasiness for them, arising from the crosses they meet with (which ought rather to be a sort of disappointment than real misfortune) in order to give us more satisfaction at seeing them happy at the unravelling of the piece; its design being to make us laugh at the expence of ridiculous persons, purging us of those faults which it exposes, that we may become fitter for society. Comedy therefore, cannot render the ridiculousness of its personages too visible to the spectators, who, whilst they discover with ease, the ridicule of others, will still find it difficult enough to discern that which is within themselves,

Now, we cannot distinguish nature so easily when she appears in strange customs, manners, and apparel, as when she is clad after our own fashion; the Spanish, Italian, and French decorum, for instance, being not so well known to us as that of England, we are not so much shocked with the ridicule of a

person that acts against them, as we should, were this personage to violate the laws of decency established here.

We always distinguish human nature in the heroes of tragedies, whether their scenes be at Rome, or at Sparta; because tragedy is universally descriptive of great virtues, and vices; men of all countries, and ages, resembling one another more in those than they do in ordinary practices and customs; in short, than in those vices, and virtues, whose pictures are drawn in comedy: hence the personages of the latter, ought to be shaped after the fashion of that country for which they were written.

It may be objected, that Plautus, and Terence, have placed the scenes of the greatest part of their pieces in a *strange country*, with respect to the Romans, for whom they had composed their comedies; the plot of their pieces supposing the laws, and customs, of the Greeks. But if this reason suffices for an objection, it is not, however, strong enough, to evince the contrary of what we have established; besides, in answer to it, we may venture to say, that Plautus, and Terence, might have been mistaken. When they first wrote, comedy was then in its infancy at Rome, whilst the Greeks had already

ready furnished the stage with most excellent pieces ; these ingenious Romans then, who had no patterns in their own language to direct them, fell into an imitation of the comedies of Menander, and other Greek poets, and thus acted Greek personages before Roman spectators.

This practice is too generally the case upon the transplantation of any art ; the first *importers* of it (if we may be allowed so familiar an expression) too strongly conform to the foreign practice, and are guilty of a mistake, in imitating at home the same originals, which that art was accustomed to mimic where they first learned it ; but experience soon teaches them to change the object of imitation ; hence it was, not long before the Roman poets found out that their comedies would be much more agreeable, were the scenes to be transferred to Rome, and the characters of that very people to be acted, who were to judge of their performances. This was done accordingly, and the comedy composed after the Roman manners, was divided into several species.

Horace, therefore, applauds such of his countrymen as first introduced Roman personages into their comedies, and thus delivered the stage from a kind of tyranny exercised over it by foreign personages ;

*Nil intentatum nostri liquere poetæ,
Nec minimum meruere décus, vestigia Graæca
Ausi deserere; et celebrare domæstica facta,
Vel qui prætextas, vel qui docuere togatas.*

HOR. de art. poet.

There are other general rules of comedy, which as they are very judiciously laid down in Rapin's 25th reflection on poetry, we think we can do nothing better on this occasion than transcribe them :

" Comedy, (says he) is a representation of common life ; its end is to shew the faults of particular characters on the stage, to correct the disorder of the people by the fear of ridicule : thus ridicule is its essential part, and may consist in words, or things, decent, or grotesque. To find what is ridiculous in every thing is the gift merely of nature, for all the actions of life have their bright, and dark sides, something serious, and something merry. Aristotle, who has given rules for drawing tears, has given none for raising laughter ; this is principally the work of nature, and must proceed from genius, with very little help from art, or matter. The Spaniards have a turn to find the ridicule in things, much more than the French, and the Italians, who are much better comedians, excel in expressing

expressing it; in short, that agreeable turn, that gaiety which maintains the delicacy of its character without falling into dullness, or buffoonery; that elegant raillery which is the flower of fine wit, is the qualification which comedy requires.

" We must, however, remember, that the artificial ridicule, which is required on the theatre, must be only a transcript of the ridicule which nature affords. Comedy is only naturally written, when being on the theatre, a man can fancy himself in a private family, or a particular part of the town, and meets with nothing, but what he really meets with in the world; for it is a mocking of this art, in which a man does not see his own picture, his own manners, and those of the people amongst whom he lives: Menander succeeded only by this art amongst the Greeks, and the Romans when they sat at Terence's comedies, imagined themselves in a private party, finding nothing there, which they had not been accustomed to find in their usual conversations.

" The great art of comedy is to adhere to nature; to have general sentiments, and expressions, which all the world can understand; the author always keeping it in his mind, that the coarsest touches after nature, will

will please more than the most delicate, where she is inconsistent: low, and mean words, notwithstanding, should never be allowed on the stage, if they are not supported by some kind of wit; proverbs, and vulgar smartnesses, should be likewise precluded, unless they have something in them of nature, and pleasantry.

“ It is by an application to the study of nature alone that we arrive at probability, which is the only infallible guide to theatrical success; without this probability every thing is defective, and that which has it is beautiful; he that follows this can never do wrong, and the most common faults of comedy proceed from the neglect of propriety, and the precipitation of incidents. Care must likewise be taken, that the hints made use of to introduce the incidents are not too strong, that the spectator may enjoy the pleasure of finding out their meaning; but commonly the weak place in comedy is, the untying of the plot, on account of the difficulty which there is in disentangling what has been perplexed. To perplex an intrigue is easy; the imagination does it by itself, but it must be disentangled merely by the judgement, and is therefore seldom done happily, which he that reflects never so little on the general

general catastrophe of comedies will readily perceive."

It remains however, to be examined, whether comedy will allow pictures larger than the life, that the strength of the strokes may make a deeper impression upon the minds of the spectators; that is, if a poet may make a covetous man rather more covetous, or a peevish man more impertinent, and troublesome than he really is. To which we answer; this was the practice of Plautus, whose aim was to please the people at large; Terence however, thought otherwise, and confined himself to represent virtue, and vice, without the least addition, or aggravation. The critics are somewhat divided in this choice; however, if we may venture to give an opinion on so balanced a subject, we must declare for Plautus, considering comedy in this respect, like pieces of perspective which require strokes somewhat stronger than nature, that they may be the better discerned as well as felt, at a distance.

After all we have said of the rules of tragedy and comedy, it may not be improper to add one general remark, which is this; that tho' we think all persons who turn their abilities towards writing for the stage, should be previously acquainted with rules; they never can, simply of themselves, constitute a good tragic, or comic writer.

In

In all liberal professions, much fundamental, and analytical knowledge is necessary; but, without genius in the exercise of this knowledge, the mere professor may be as exact, and regular, as a time-piece, but equally dull and uninstructive.

CHAP.

C H A P. XVII.

Of SENTIMENTAL COMEDY.

WHO the laws of the drama know no species of comedy under this title, yet as the prevalence of custom has not only of late admitted it, but given it a first rate place on our theatres, it very properly becomes an object of enquiry in this work.

Were we to reason by analogy, we should never be able to find out the cause of so unclassical a supersession, for whoever will make the comparison between that comedy left us by antiquity, and so ably continued to us by several of our English poets with this, will find the features too dissimilar to claim the most distant reference; in the former, we have a fable founded on the laws of probability, and nature; characters speaking the language of their conformation, and the whole stage reflecting the manners of the world; in the latter, names instead of characters, poetical egotisms for manners, bombast for sentiment, and instead of wit and humour, (the very essence of comedy) a driveling species of morality, which as a term generally applied to ethics, may properly enough

enough be called *good*, but from being falsely applied to comedy (however it may excite the *piety* of the crowd) must nauseate men of sense, and education.

There is a circumstance which we think has been a leading assistant in the establishment of this false taste. Without meaning to turn reformers, and inconsiderately fall in with the vulgar opinion of generally condemning the present age, merely because it is the present age; thus much we think we are warranted to assert; that the present age, however it may be free from great, and leading vices, is peculiarly marked by a *slavish effeminacy of manners*, and *universality of indolent dissipation*, unknown to former ages; hence the people of fashion, unwilling to see such just emblems of themselves on the stage as comedy *should* represent, thought it better to assume a virtue which they had not, by crying up the *theory* of morality as a kind of cover for the *breach* of it. The lower kinds of people having no other models in their eye, than those whom they often mistakenly call their *bettters*, without weighing this opinion, followed their example; so that between the two parties nature began to be called vulgar, and every thing partaking of the low, humorous, or vicious, (principal ingredients in comedy) began to be under-

der-rated, because the former had an interest in decrying them, and the latter permitted themselves to be duped by the artifice.

It is the voice of the public forms the public taste. Comedy, which is above all walks of writing, perhaps the most difficult, and unattainable, and which according to one of the most distinguished characters of the last age, “—is the *first* pretence”

To judgement, breeding, wit, and eloquence. Being thus vitiated; there were not wanting poets, who, departing from the honourable line of their profession, (or to speak more correctly, unacquainted with the principles of their profession) prescribed to this innovation. Sir Richard Steel's *Conscious Lovers*, we believe, was the first in this line of writing; not that we would class this, in other respects, elegant and judicious writer with the general run of poets who have since succeeded him in this line; we only mean to say, that the pathetic scenes of this comedy, made the first departure, of any consequence, from that sterling kind of writing left us by antiquity; and consequently, the general reputation of Sir Richard Steel, who was at that time much above par as a moral writer, first gave it the stamp of fashion.

Comedy being thus debauched, like an unhappy female, began to be viewed in the light

light of common game, by those poets who dare not look up to her in the days of her chastity; such finding the intercourse easy, and the profits great, immediately hired themselves in her service. The success of one fool drew many; they had nothing to do but exchange the *vis comica* for the pathetic, and substitute tame individual recital for natural dialogue; in short, a novel furnished them with the plot; a servile allusion to all the little chat of the times, for wit, and humour; and the Whole Duty of Man, *Pamela*, or the Oeconomy of Human Life, for sentiments. Thus an art originally invented to lash the follies, and imperfections of mankind, through the vehicle of ridicule; an art which should ever be considered as the greatest test of wit, breeding, and observation; an art, "whose end both at the first, and now was, and is, to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature, to shew virtue her own features, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure," is changed into what is vulgarly called a moral kind of entertainment, where a citizen, 'tis true, may bring his wife, and daughter to, with as much *safety* as to a Methodist chapel, but with equal prospect of improvement.

But

But as we mean to treat this subject otherwise than either investigating its origin, or simply declaiming on its imperfections; it will be but candid to weigh the force of the arguments, which are urged by the favourers of this innovated art.

The first and most flattering to the passions of the public is, that vicious, or ridiculous characters, tho' sentimental writers are *piously* afraid such do *sometimes* exist in nature, yet it would ill become the dignity of their pens to exhibit them on the stage, least they might become objects of imitation ; hence they are for the most part excluded their pieces, or if at times admitted, but feebly sketched in the back ground, whilst the principal figures are tricked out in all the brilliancy of virtue, without the least shade of mortality. To pass by the great defect of this practice, as it respects the laws of comedy ; let us take it up on their own ground, and see how it is fitted to succeed in the *reformation of manners*.

The soundest philosophers have agreed, that ridicule has a much better effect in curing the vices, and imperfections of men, than the examples of rigid virtue, whose duties are so sublimed, that they for the most part intimidate them from the trial. Were mankind made of that moral pliability of mind, so as to be capable of receiving the sharpest im-

pressions of virtue, then indeed some excuse might stand for the latter practice; but as their hearts are composed of as many degrees of imperfection, as there are degrees in society—what will best, and most effectually reform them, should be adopted; hence no characters should be introduced on the stage by any means whatever, above the tone of mortality, whilst the *liar, rake, fop, sharper, hypocrite, glutton, &c. &c.* should be always brought forward in the warmest colourings of ridicule. Similar characters in life, finding themselves thus constantly exposed on the stage, would indirectly feel the *shame* of their situations, and either abandon them entirely, or be taught to qualify them so as to be less inimical to society; whereas at present, by being for the most part, precluded as objects of *ridicule*, and *contempt*, the world loses the benefit of their reformation.

Another argument urged for our sentimental dramatists is, that as 'tis the world gives reputation and credit to works of art and science; it at present, relishing no other species of comedy but the *sentimental*, they are not to be blamed for writing up to that standard. But this is ever the excuse of *little minds*, who under a shew of complying with the world, cover their own ignorance, and unfitness, to stand candidates for fame, and immor-

immortality; as there is nothing more certain, than that a *real genius*; in whatever kind, can never, without the greatest unwillingness, and shame, be induced to act below his character, and for *mere interest* be prevailed on to prostitute his knowledge, by performing contrary to certain rules.

Whoever has heard any thing of the lives of famous statuaries, architects, or painters, will call to mind many instances of this nature? Or whoever has made any acquaintance with the better sort of *mechanics*, such as are real lovers of their art, and masters in it, must have observed their natural fidelity in this respect? be they never so idle, dissolute, or debauched; how regardless soever of other rules, they abhor any transgression in their art, and would chuse to lose customers and starve, rather than by a base compliance with the world, act contrary to what they call the justnes, and truth of work *.

This is virtue! real virtue, and love of truth, independent of opinion, and above the world; this disposition transferred to the whole of life, perfects a character, and gives it that finish which extorts even the admiration of those who cannot practise it.

Had the early poets of *Greece* thus complimented the *world* by complying with its

false relish, and unsettled appetites, they had not done their countrymen such service, nor themselves such honour; those generous spirits scorning to suit themselves to the world, manfully drew it after them; they forced their way into it, and by weight of merit turned its judgement on their side; they formed their audience, refined the public ear, and polished the age, that in return they may be rightly and lastingly applauded: they were not disappointed, applause soon came, and was lasting, for it was found; they have justice done them at this day, they have survived their nation, and live in all languages; the more each age is enlightened, the more they shine, and their fame must necessarily last as long as letters, and judgement exist.

Many of our sentimental dramatic authors, 'tis true, may pique themselves on their superior situations in life to several of those of antiquity, and jocularly confign immortality to such who are now no longer able to enjoy it; not considering, because *not feeling*, that *this hope of immortality* was then as much their reward, as their labours have since been the benefit of posterity. They may run the comparison still further, by proving (as well by the receipts of the theatres, as by those

of

of their booksellers) how much more exact they are in proportioning the *quality*, and *quantity*, of the public demand, and with what greater dexterity, and cunning, they pander to the taste of an audience: but such are to know, that success is by no means the criterion of desert; that however, they may, for a while, triumph in the absence of truth, and nature, the period is hastening (if the proverb is true, that things at the *worst* must necessarily mend) when this spell of *sentimental enchantment* must be dissolved, and when real comedy shall once more unfurl her standard of reason on the theatre.

The public at large have sometimes their false appetites, and unnatural cravings like individuals, which, such is the situation of human affairs, time, or accident alone, must eradicate. The Fanatics under Cromwell, with all the parade of hypocrisy on one side, and the vindictive spirit of revenge on the other, christened their conduct *religion*; and not only the dregs of the people hailed it by this name, but the guardians of the state echoed it back on the public; yet but a few years, a very few years elapsed, when this ridiculous scene had its final close, reason once more re-assumed her throne;

and he that had no other pretensions to christianity than the *starchness of his band*, or the talent of *speaking through his nose*, was justly reprobated as a cheat, or a driveller.

C H A P.

C H A P. XVIII.

That the Characters of COMEDY are far from being as yet exhausted.

ANOTHER argument urged by the writers of *sentimental* comedy, as an excuse for their want of genius is, that most, if not all, the comic subjects are already exhausted. They will allow that tragic poets can never want subjects, because they can introduce personages into any action in whatever sort of character they please, and can embellish also the fable with extraordinary incidents, invented just as their fancy suggests; but a comic poet, say they, must exhibit portraits in which we can discover those with whom we live, and converse; consequently Shakespeare, Moliere, &c. and their successors, have been before-hand with us in seizing all the real characters in nature.

In answer to this objection, we may venture to affirm, that Shakespeare, Moliere, &c. and their imitators, have still left for the stage characters in abundance for forming the subjects of comedy. The case is pretty

nearly the same with respect to men's minds, and characters, as with their countenances; man's face is composed of the same parts; of two eyes, one mouth, &c. and yet men's countenances are all different, because they are differently composed; now the characters of men are not only differently composed, but besides they are not always the same parts, that is, the same vices, the same virtues, and the same projects, that enter into the composition of their character; wherefore, the characters of men ought to have a much greater difference, and variety, than even men's faces.

The word character implies a composition of several failings and virtues; in this mixture, some particular vice predominates, if the character be vicious; and some virtue or other prevails, if the character be virtuous; thus the different characters of men are so diversified by this mixture of vices, virtues, and natural parts differently combined, that two characters perfectly alike, are a much greater phænomenon in nature than two faces of a complete resemblance.

Every well drawn character makes a good personage in comedy, and every such character can act with success a part, more or less long, more or less important—why should love be a privileged passion and the only one that

that can furnish a variety of characters, by means of the diversity, which age, sex, and profession, cause in the sentiments of lovers? Cannot the character of a miser be likewise varied by age, by passions, as also by profession? these characters if well drawn, would never be tiresome, because they exist in nature, and a plain and ingenuous description of her, is always agreeable. If therefore, any of our modern comic writers complain of their being unable to bring new characters upon the stage, it must proceed from their not being clear sighted enough to read into nature, to unravel distinctly the different principles of the same actions, and to see how the same principles operate differently upon every individual.

To have a distinct and just idea of what can form a character, requires a capacity of discerning three, or four touches, that belong to a man's peculiar temper, amongst twenty, or thirty things which he says, or does in common with the rest of mankind; one must likewise collect these touches, and pursuing the study of the model, extract, as it were from his actions, and discourses, such strokes as are properst for conveying a knowledge of the portrait.

These

These are the strokes which separated from such indifferent things, as all men say, and do pretty near alike, and afterwards collected together, constitute what we call a *character*, and give it its theatrical finish: all men appear alike to limited capacities; to persons of a better understanding they all seem different. Thus every man is an original to a poet blest with a truly comic, and distinguishing genius.

The portraits of ordinary painters are generally placed in one attitude, and have nearly the same air, because such painters are not knowing enough in their art to discern the individual difference, which discriminates each particular portrait; but an able artist knows how to give every one the certain air, and attitude, that belongs to him, by virtue of his conformation; for possessing the talent of discerning people's natural temper, and disposition, which are always different, the countenance, and action, therefore, of the persons he draws, are constantly varied.

Experience likewise helps us very much to find out the real difference between objects, which, at first sight, appear the same. Those who look at negroes, for instance, the first time, imagine their countenances are all alike, but by seeing them often they discover as great a variety in their faces as in those of Europeans;

Europeans; and hence, Moliere found out more originals in the world when he came to the age of fifty, than when he was but forty; because he had looked longer, and more intensely, on the different features of mankind.

The generality of the world, are only capable of discovering a character, when it has received its due form, and has been theatrically finished; but, there are none, except such as are possessed with a genius for comedy, that are capable of discerning this character as long as the particular strokes which are necessary for discerning it, remain blended and confused in an infinite variety of discourses, and actions, which decency, mode, custom, profession, and interest, set all men upon saying, and doing, pretty near with the same air; 'tis they alone can inform us what character would result from those strokes were they to be detached, and afterwards contracted in one body. In fine, to discern the difference of characters in nature, being properly the work of invention, a man that is born without a comic genius properly improved, is as incapable of distinguishing those characters, as a person without a genius for painting, is unable to discern which are the most proper objects in nature for the exercise of his profession.—“ How

many

many things (says Cicero) do painters observe in a particular incident of light, that are imperceptible to our eyes."

We conclude, therefore, that a poet, whom a disposition of genius, and not a *mercenary view of subsistence*, has called to the art, will always be able to discover new subjects in nature; his predecessors (if we may be allowed the figurative expression) having left him perhaps as much marble in the quarry as they themselves have disinterred.

C H A P. XIX.

Whether Tragedy, or Comedy, be the more difficult to write?

WAS this question to be decided by the general success of either, the former undoubtedly would claim the preference. Comedy being a picture of living manners, most people think themselves qualified to like, or dislike ; whilst tragedy marking the characters of persons much above this level, busied in the conduct of great events, unfamiliar to the walks of middle life, deters the *many* from attempting to judge even of its errors (except indeed, they are very glaring) whilst its beauties are always sure to captivate, and surprise ; thus tragedy has a kind of artificial advantage over comedy. But as 'twould be as unfair to rest upon such a decision, as it would be to ascribe wisdom to a judge, merely because he is dressed differently from other men, we shall take a more impartial view of this question, by considering, and contrasting, its respective difficulties.

Though

Though the general outlines of tragedy are limited, its characters are without number; as dissimulation, jealousy, policy, ambition, and other interests, and passions which take a thousand different forms in different situations of history. Thus the ambitious, blood-thirsty Richard III. so happily painted by Shakespeare, did not stand in the way of the same poet when he drew his Macbeth; a small alteration of character discriminated them so as to make them equally striking, new and distinct; for tho' they are both possessed of ambition, and both waded through blood to their several crowns, yet by giving the former a natural disposition for cruelty, and the other an artificial one, mostly made up by the solicitations of his wife, the incidents produced in consequence, become as unlike in each as two tragedies formed upon extreme different subjects.

But the case is much the contrary, with avarice, jealousy, vanity, hypocrisy, and other vices, considered as the subjects of comedy; it would be easier to double, and treble, all the tragedies of our greatest poets, and multiply their subjects almost without end, than introduce again upon the stage, any of Moliere's principal characters; not

that the popular vices belonging to such, are less capable of diversification, or are less varied by different circumstances than the vices, and passions of heroes, but that if they were to be brought on again in comedies (except by a first-rate genius) they would be less distinct, less exact, less forcible, and consequently less applauded; pleasantry, and ridicule, requiring to be more strongly marked than heroism, and pathos, which principally support themselves by their own force.

If comedy was amongst us what it is in Spain, a kind of romance, consisting of many circumstances, and intrigues, perplexed, and disentangled, merely for the purpose of surprise, there would be always a resource found in a variety of incidents; but the case is very different; real comedy calls for *new characters*; multiplicity of accidents, and the laborious contrivance of an intrigue, no more than *sentimental drivelling*, will be allowed to shelter a weak genius, who would find great conveniences in either way of writing; her taste requires an air less constrained, and such a freedom, and ease of manners, as equally preclude the *preacher*, and *romance writer*; allowing nothing but a succession of characters resembling nature,
and

and falling in without any laboured contrivance.

But let us consider the final purposes of tragedy and comedy. Is not the one the art of striking those strings of the heart which are most natural, *terror*, and *pity*? And is not the other, the art of making us *laugh*? now the gentleman, and the rustic, in tragedy, have both sensibility and tenderness of heart, perhaps, in a greater or less degree; but as they are *men* alike, the heart is moved by the same touches; whereas in comedy the strings which must be touched for this purpose, are not the same in the gentleman, and the rustic. The latter will laugh out on the coarsest jest, whereas the former is only to be moved by a delicate conceit; the passions depending on nature, merriment upon education.

The spectators of a tragedy, if they have but little knowledge, are almost all on a level; but with respect to comedy, we have many classes of people, all of whom will judge in their own way. The laughter of a theatre is of a very different stamp with that which is given to good humour, conviviality, complaisance, respect, and flattery. In these artifice and wine, are the general motives; but in a theatre every spectator impartially judges of wit, by his own stand-

ard, and measures its extent and force by his capacity, and condition. Thus different capacities and conditions of men, making them diverted on very different occasions, it requires the highest exertion of genius, to diffuse *wit* or humour, so as it shall be universally felt.

If, therefore, we consider the end of the tragic and comic poet, the comedian must be involved in much more difficulties, without taking in the obstructions to be encountered equally by both, in an art which consists in raising the passions, or the mirth of a great multitude. The tragedian has little to do but to reflect upon his own thoughts, and draw from his heart those sentiments which will certainly make their way to the hearts of others; whilst the comedian must take many forms, and change himself, like a second Proteus, almost into as many persons as he undertakes to divert. In short, to make the former, is to get materials together, and to arrange them like a skilful architect; but to make the latter, is to build, like *Æsop*, in the air. Hence we would give the preference to comedy, which we would be understood, however, by no means, to pronounce as a dogma, but as an opinion we have a right to give upon a general subject of enquiry.

C H A P. XX.

Of PANTOMIME.

THE name of pantomime, which signifies an imitator of every thing, was first given to those comedians, who imitated and explained all sorts of subjects by gestures. It originated amongst the Romans, as we are told by Zozimus, and Suidas, under the reign of Augustus Cæsar.

The two first inventors of this new art, were Pylades, and Bathyllus, who have both rendered their names celebrated in the Roman history. They were both rivals in their art, the former protected by the Emperor, the latter by Mecænas, and their disputes, at times, ran so high with the public, that Cæsar himself once advising Pylades to live in greater harmony with his competitor, the other had the confidence to remark, “ That the best thing that could happen to him, was to see his people busied in such a dispute;” thereby indicating, that he could carry on the purposes of government more uninterruptedly.

What seems very surprising, that those pantomimes who so charmed the Roman people

people in this æra of their highest polish, and refinement, did not make use of the motions of their face; it being certain that they gesticulated with *masks*, in the same manner as the other comedians. Lucian says, in his treatise of dancing, “ That the pantomimic mask had not a wide mouth, like those of common comedians, but was much handsomer;” and Macrobius relates, “ That Pylades being vexed one day when he was acting the character of *Hercules Furens*, because the spectators complained his gesticulation was extravagant,” cried out to them, “ Don’t you know, ye fools, that I am acting the part of a greater fool than yourselves.”

Yet, notwithstanding this very great inconvenience, the pantomime was so entire master of his action, and rendered his expression so marking, and intelligible, that their general character was, — — —

*Tot linguae quot membra viro, mirabilis est ars
Quæ facit articulos, ore silenti loqui.*

and Cassidorus (with many other respectable authors) after speaking of the tragedies, and comedies, that were represented on the stage, calls the pantomimes, “ Men whose eloquent hands, had a tongue as it were on the

tip of each finger : men who spoke whilst they were silent, and who knew how to make an entire recital without opening their mouths ; men, in short, whom Polyhymnia had formed, in order to shew that there was no necessity for articulating in order to convey our thoughts."

Lucian, likewise, declares himself a zealous partisan of these dumb comedians, and we find, he took a pleasure in relating such facts as might be an honour to their profession. Amongst other things, he says, that a Cynic philosopher treated their art as a childish amusement, and defined it a collection of gesticulations, which the music and decorations rendered barely tolerable ; but a pantomime of Nero's court, willing to shew this Philosopher he was in the wrong, executed before him the amours of Mars and Venus, in dumb declamation, without any instrument to accompany him ; upon which the Cynic frankly acknowledged they were masters of a real art.

The same author relates, that a king whose dominions bordered upon the Euxine sea, happening to be at Rome under the reign of Nero, begged of that prince very earnestly, to let him have a pantomime he had seen act, that he might make him his general interpreter in all languages, " This fellow

fellow (said he) will make all the world understand him, whereas I am obliged to have I don't know how many interpreters, in order to keep up a correspondence with my neighbours, who speak a great many different languages, which I don't understand." Tho' 'tis not very difficult to conceive how the pantomimes could contrive to give an intelligible description of an action, and to signify by their gesture the words taken in their proper sense; such as the heavens, the earth, a man, &c. But how is it possible (some will ask) to express by gestures, words taken in a *figurative sense*, which occur so frequently in poetry.

The only satisfactory answer we can give to this question is, to relate the following story from Macrobius, which in a great respect, may give us some idea of the manner: Hilas, the disciple, and competitor of Pylades, (the first inventor of pantomime) executed a monologue after his manner, which ended with these words, "*The Great Agamemnon*;" Hilas to express them, made all the gestures of a man that wants to measure another bigger than himself; when Pylades, who was in the pit, unable to contain himself, cried out, " Friend, by this you make Agamemnon only a *big man*, not a *great man*." On this the people immediately

M 2 called

called out for Pylades to perform it himself; he complied; and when he came to that part for which he had publicly censured his disciple, he represented by his gesture, and attitude, the countenance of a person immersed in deep meditation, pointing out very properly by this action, that a man greater than others was he who had profounder thoughts.

As we cannot, however, bring ocular testimony to the representations of those pantomimes, we are as little capable of deciding on the positive merit of their art, and how it was possible to be executed with such astonishing success, as we are of the method of dividing the antient declamation between two actors; those, however, who are diverted with seeing the Italian comedy at this day, may be even from, this specimen, convinced, that several scenes may be executed without speaking; but we can alledge a fact as related by the Abbe Du Bos, which will evince better than any argument the possibility of the execution.

“ About the beginning of this century, a princess *, remarkable for her great talents, and

* Tho’ the Abbe Du Bos has not named this princess, we think it pretty evident, he must mean Christina Queen of Sweden, daughter of the Great Gustavus Adolphus,

and taste for public spectacles, had a mind to see an essay of the antient pantomimic art, in order to acquire a clearer idea of their representations, than she had conceived by reading. For want of actors practised in this art, she solicited a man and woman dancer of a superior genius in their profession, and extremely capable of inventing. She had ordered them to get ready, to represent only with gesticulation, at the theatre *de Sceaux*, the scene of the fourth act of the *Horatii* of Corneille, in which the young Horatius kills his sister Camilla. They accordingly executed it, accompanied with music, adapted by a great master, to the words of the scene; the effect of which was, our two new pantomimes animated one another to such a degree, by their gesticulations, and expressive movements, that at length they shed tears, and consequently communicated them to the whole audience."

From this instance, which is too recent, and comes from too respectable an author to be doubted, we may very well credit antiquity for the surprising accounts of their

M 4 panto-

phus, whose *genobant* for the fine arts, and the general study of antiquity was so great, that for the purpose of giving up all her time to travel, and improvement, she quitted the throne of her ancestors, in the very meridian of life and power.

pantomimes ; particularly, when we consider the very great pains they were at in breeding them up to this profession. Under an idea, that castration produced a suppleness in their bodies superior to other men, they all previously underwent this operation ; the pantomimer likewise required a particular size, and make ; and after he had been instructed in feats of activity in attitude, and grace, he underwent a regular study in music, history, and several literary accomplishments.

This art at present lingers in Italy ; in England, tho' it never arrived to perfection in all its parts, (perhaps on account of our natural action not being lively and eloquent enough to be readily understood without the accompaniment of discourse) yet it received great encouragement at times ; particularly, under the celebrated Lun, and his pupil Mr. Rich, late sole patentee of Covent-Garden theatre ; who as far as mimicry went in their own persons (bating the wide difference between antient and modern pantomimic education) were perhaps little inferior to the artists of antiquity.

But it has been the case with this country, that however, we may have occasionally succeeded in pantomime performers, the art itself came to us in a mutilated, and imperfect

fect state. With the Romans, there was always a fable invented, or taken from history, composed of regular parts, by which it became a considerable species of the drama; full of instruction, and entertainment, and was in consequence (as we have before observed) often much more followed than tragedies and comedies. With us, we never had a fable important enough to draw the attention, and esteem of the curious; consequently the whole force of the pantomime rested on a single character, who generally wasted his attitudes in the explanation of trifles. But even these imperfect remains of pantomime are now exploded; for since the death of Mr. Rich, we have had no pantomime who did not consider his art to consist in fidgetting, skipping, and leaping; and as for fable, it is entirely substituted by a jumble of mechanical deceptions, obviously calculated for no other purpose, than to draw together the great, and little vulgar, at the expence of public taste, and judgement.

C H A P. XXI.

Of FARCE.

THIS word is generally allowed to derive from the French word *Farci*, which signifies *forced meat*, or stuffing; perhaps alluding to its being *forced in* amongst more rational amusements, to make the whole more palatable to the gross of an audience. It seems to be a Gothic imitation of the ancient *Mimes*, and originally consisted of little pieces of drollery, exhibited by buffoons in the open streets, to gather people together, as is done at this day, in many squares of this metropolis, by mountebanks, and others. The poets reforming the wildness of those primitive farces, removed them from the streets to the theatre, and instead of being performed by Jack Puddings, brought them somewhat to the manner of comedy, and had them performed by regular comedians.

The difference between the two on our stage is, that comedy keeps to nature and probability, being confined to certain laws, and prescriptions, whereas the other, *occasionally* dispenses with all laws; its principal end being merely to make merry, it consequently

ly rejects nothing that may contribute to that point, however wild, and extravagant; hence the dialogue is usually low, the characters of inferior rank, the fable trivial, or ridiculous, and nature, and truth, every where heightened to afford the more palpable ridicule. *a latitude in manner before it is*

But we are every day improving in this department of the drama; as the farces of these last twenty years, instead of exhibiting the most improbable fables, and lowest species of humour, have assumed the denomination of petite pieces of comedy (or as they are generally called comedies of two acts,) which, however, they may want the full extent of the *vis comica*, are many of them, far from being deficient in outline, humour, and observation. We should consider it some degree of injustice, not to mention that the public are principally indebted for this reform to Mr. Murphy, who has shewn such a happiness in his choice of subjects, and such a knowledge of the world in treating them, that from their real merit, and the warm reception they still meet with (notwithstanding their novelty has been long since worn off) they bid fair to lead the present stock of acting farces, whilst a real taste for this species of the drama remains amongst us.

C H A P. XXII.

A Sketch of the Education of the Greek and Roman Actors.

IT IS but reasonable to judge of the progress a nation made in arts, of which we have no monuments to found a solid decision of, by the progress this very nation made in other arts of which we have some remains. Now the monuments extant of poetry, eloquence, painting, sculpture, and the architecture of the antients, are evident proofs that they were skilful in all these arts, and had carried them to a high degree of perfection ; from these, why should not our opinion be in favour of their theatrical representations, so as to incline us to think, we should give them (could we but see them) the same commendations we bestow on their buildings, statues, and writings ? and from this line of deduction, may we not draw from the excellence of their poems, a strong presumption in favour of the merit of their actors, who must, to have done justice to such excellent compositions, be perfect masters in judgement, grace, and elocution ?

But

But we can go further in this point than mere inferences; we are positively informed of some facts, that shew the profession to be at once liberal, and acquired by those progressive exercises, and studies necessary to support such excellent compositions. In the first place, we are informed, that an apprenticeship (where in all probability none were admitted but those who had proper personal, and mental qualifications, to recommend them) was absolutely necessary. Cicero tells us *, that frequently after this, the tragic players used to practise whole years before they appeared upon the stage; and the Scholiast of Aristophanes, positively says, no actor could publicly appear on the stage 'till he was *thirty years of age*; a period of life, however, it may be now thought too late for the representation of youthful passions, and the general ardour of the profession; yet by no means so,—when we consider the various kinds of knowledge, and laborious exercises, demanded from an actor of antiquity.

They likewise, in the beginning declaimed sitting; with a view of acquiring (which it certainly effected) a greater facility when they come to speak standing upon the stage;

For

* Cic. de Orat. lib. I.

For as Quintilian * observes, “ The labour we go through in our apprenticeship, should be much harder than what we are to endure when we become masters of our art.” Hence it was usual, to exercise the Gladiators with heavier arms than those with which they fought.

Cicero again informs us †, that the great actors would never speak a word in the morning before they had expectorated methodically their voice, letting it lose by degrees, that they might not hurt the organs by emitting it with too much precipitancy, and violence. They likewise took care to lye in bed during this exercise; after they had done acting,---they in this posture, carefully shut up the voice again, (if we may be allowed the expression) first raising it to the highest tone to which they had ascended in declaiming, and afterwards depressing it successively, 'till they came to the lowest.

The singularity of this assertion, though coming from such authority, may be doubted, did not the writings of the antients abound with facts, which shew that their attention to whatever might strengthen, and improve the voice, was carried even to a degree of superstition. We find by the third chapter

* Quint. lib. II.

† Cic. de Orat. lib. I.

chapter of the eleventh book of Quintilian's Institutes, that with respect to all kinds of eloquence, the antients made a profound study of the voice, and of all the methods for clarifying, and strengthening it. Nay, the art of managing, and preserving it, was become a particular profession, and Pliny points out in several parts of his natural history no less than twenty plants which were reckoned specifics for that purpose. Nero * was the inventor of a new method of strengthening the voice, which consisted in declaiming as loud as possible, with a leaden plate upon his breast; and Suetonius † adds to this account, that upon his return from Greece, he was so extremely careful of not hurting it, that he not only made use of several particular drugs, but whenever he mustered his troops, he declined calling each soldier by his name, according to the custom of the Romans, but ordered a domestic to perform that office.

From the great care and attention, shewn by the antients in this particular, we may infer, what industry the several parts of their profession cost them. We have already seen, in the former part of this work, that a knowledge of music, and dancing, were likewise

* Pliny hist. lib. 39. cap. III.

† Suetonius in Nerone.

likewise absolutely necessary, otherwise the saltation, and recitation, could not be performed to any advantage; so that upon the whole, we may reasonably conclude, that the entire qualifications of an actor were such as gave him many, and superior advantages to other professions.

The public at large, assisted by their encouragement, such combined talents; by holding the profession liberal, and paying every compliment to its professors. The spectators who composed an antient audience, tho' so very numerous, sat with the greatest attention, and decorum; if any one offended, he was immediately turned out by the proper officers in waiting, and if he persisted in disturbing the audience, a fine was his punishment. In Greece, the actors were generally persons of the first rank in letters as in family, and for the most part orators and poets; nay, sometimes we find kings themselves unbinding, for awhile, the diadems from their brows, to improve and entertain their subjects on the stage.

In Rome, indeed, from the scandalous lives of some of the lowest of the profession, the comedians were excluded from the freedom of the city; yet those who became eminent in their art, and undebauched in their lives, were sure of acquiring riches, freedom,

freedom, and the public esteem. 'Tis to the Grecian actor Satyrus, the world is indebted to the thunders of Demosthenes, and we have it under his own hand, that the attic eloquence of Cicero received no inconsiderable force, and polish from the precepts and examples of his friend Roscius.



C H A P. XXIII.

General Instructions for succeeding in the Art of Acting.

FROM the preceding chapter, we are enabled to judge, that the profession of acting is not as much attended to now as it was formerly. Without going into invidious comparisons, we see the one attained by a previous education and uncommon industry; the other generally taken up to indulge with more impunity the follies or vices of youth, or as the dernier resource of difficulty and distress. We should be sorry, however, to say, there are not some exceptions to this assertion, particularly *one*, who has assisted, perhaps, the greatest natural genius with the most uncommon industry, who has thought no period of excellence precluded him from admonition, and *who* has made no other use of the early and united applauses of the world, than as a spur to quicken him in the further pursuits of fame.

Were all his fraternity, like this *great example*, we should have no occasion to sit down to a treatise of this kind, (as 'tis from great geniuses rules are drawn, not prescribed to ;)

to;) but the contrary being the fact, we imagine some general rules relative to the profession, may not be altogether unuseful; particularly as we are led to believe, that many actors, hurried away by the vulgar prejudice, that *nature* must do *all*, have, in consequence, paid little, or no attention to *art*; thinking, perhaps, her assistance not only immaterial, but incompatible with the genius of their profession.

The most methodical treatise on this subject, we have ever remembered to have seen, is Mr. Aaron Hill's "Treatise on the Art of Acting," where he has distributed the whole into ten dramatic passions, joy, grief, fear, anger, pity, scorn, hatred, jealousy, wonder, and love. Each of these he has afterwards defined, and added to this definition, particular directions how to accommodate the voice and action; so that, from so copious a treatise, one would be led to imagine he had exhausted the subject. But he has, in our opinion, rather mistaken the manner of treating it; attempting to give a rule for every thing, he has reduced those things to a standard of mechanism, which should be left to *nature* and *observation*; and when he talks of the *stretching of the neck*, the *inflation of the breast*, the *erection of the back bone*, the *minute disposition of the arms, wrist, fingers, bip, knce, ankle, &c.*

he writes more like a Martinet on Tactics, than a philosopher in the investigation of the human passions.

Shakespeare, however, has given us a specimen of this kind of instruction in the passion of anger, which is at once so much a *rule* and an *example*, that 'tis impossible for a man of feeling to express the speech otherwise than he has directed ; as our readers will readily judge from the speech itself.

“ Now imitate the action of the tyger ;
 “ Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood,
 “ Lend fierce and dreadful aspect to the eye ;
 “ Set the teeth close, and stretch the nostril
 “ wide,
 “ Hold hard the breath, and bend up every
 “ spirit
 “ To its full height.”

Lessons containing such admirable instructions as this speech gives us, we would recommend to the serious perusal of every actor ; but this great natural preceptor, was too busy in drawing the passions themselves to leave us many rules how they should be mechanically expressed ; hence this knowledge must principally be obtained by every performer's own observation and natural feelings ; rules, so exceedingly exact, (except, perhaps, in the hands of so inimitable a master as Shakespeare) would

would be the fetters, instead of the aids of genius. But to proceed,

In the prosecution of every liberal art or profession, it is necessary for the pupil to undergo some previous education. The divine, the lawyer, the physician, have their courses of study marked out for them ; nay, the mechanic has his seven years apprenticeship to recommend him ; and it would form one of those ridiculous circumstances, which perhaps never happened, to see a man stand candidate for any one of these, without attempting at least to deserve it. Yet so it is, that the profession of an actor, which is little less than a combination of the polite arts, seems to be almost universally neglected. The *commonest educations*, with an *inclination* for the stage, generally make out a passport for its candidates, and with these *powerful accomplishments*, they look forward, even to the chair of a Garrick.

But, like their fellow-dreamers in matrimony, they soon wake *behind the curtain* ; they discover something wanting in themselves to gain them that applause from the public, which youthful passions suggested ; the time, however, passes too pleasantly behind the scenes to correct this, by sacrificing their leisure to improvement ; and finding themselves kept in countenance by numbers

in the same line of profession, they, by degrees, entirely lose sight of it. Thus, from the dearth of good actors, (occasioned by the same neglect) they rise to rank on the theatre more from *seniority*, than either natural, or acquired abilities, and converting a liberal profession into a *profitable trade*, they are content if they can merely *go through their business*, heedless of fame and reputation. Without meaning to be particular, or the least ill-natured, we believe this picture may claim too general a likeness amongst the sons and daughters of the stage, to be rejected as a caricatura. To endeavour then, to make them more perfect in a profession, which has so many agreeable, yet difficult parts to be known, we shall, in the course of these chapters, draw out such a sketch of theatrical education, as we think, added to a natural genius, cannot fail (if attended to) of answering that purpose.

We must take it for granted, that every man, who stands a candidate for theatrical reputation, must be at least free from those personal defects that unfit him for the stage; for so singular and critical are the requisites for this profession, that the *body*, as well as the *mind*, becomes the subject of a spectator's animadversion; and the least awkwardness and deficiency in the former, will operate so

power-

powerfully on the latter, as to involve it in all its errors. But this is a point so obvious to the commonest observation, that we shall no longer insist on it.

In respect to what degree of education may be necessary for an actor, we think a thorough knowledge of the English classics sufficient; yet, under this head, we would include translations of such of the antients as may be necessary; not that we would, by any means, preclude a more learned education, provided it was accompanied with all those other branches of knowledge, which form the requisites of the stage; but it so very rarely happens, that a deep scholar has sacrificed sufficiently to the graces—it is only on this principle, we think it better not to risque so wide a compass of education.

But to be more particular. It is proper for every actor to be well-studied in *grammar*; as this is an art which teaches the relation of words to each other, it will instruct him in their force and meaning, and consequently enable him to speak with emphasis and correctness. To depend on the *marks* and *punctuation* of play-house transcribers, (as we are afraid too many of the profession do) is very often depending on ignorance, sanctioned by custom, as such are in general exceedingly uneducated, and have no other guides than the

books and opinions of prompters, who are very often themselves not much better informed. A knowledge of grammar, beside detecting the ignorance and mistakes of transcribers, will likewise teach an actor to detect the lapses of authors themselves, who, from being too warmly engaged in the main design, or through carelessness, or ignorance, will sometimes commit the greatest inaccuracies; in short, so many are the benefits resulting from this branch of science, that we must consider it as an introduction to the profession, not to be dispensed with on any account whatsoever,

To the knowledge of grammar, we would join an acquaintance with that part of the *Belles Lettres*, which includes poetry and oratory. By the former, the actor will not only be able to accustom his mind to beautiful images and descriptions, but it will improve his taste, in directing him to seize upon those passages which he goes through, in the course of his profession, with feeling and propriety. The measure of poetry will likewise harmonize his ear, and give him that facility in speaking on the stage, equal to that in common conversation, the want of which we have often known to disfigure the finest passages, and interrupt the warmest feelings.

In

In respect to oratory, we do not mean that an actor should go through the regular study of it as laid down in the schools, the *exordium, narration, proposition, confirmation, refutation, and conclusion*; however these may be necessary in the senate, the pulpit, or the bar, a less minute knowledge may serve him, as his business is not to *invent*, but *repeat*; his theory, therefore, may be formed on the translated orations of Demosthenes, Cicero, Isocrates, &c. with the most select of the moderns; his practice on those of our most celebrated lawyers, senators, and divines. The use that such a knowledge will be to him in his profession, must be obvious to all those who can judge of the beauties of dramatic declamation; who but an orator, for instance, should be entrusted with the speech of Anthony over the dead body of Julius Cæsar? a composition so happily formed of the *pathetic* and *ingenious*, as, perhaps, might enter the lists with the most finished orations of antiquity.

Though it may seem unnecessary to insist in this place, on an intimate knowledge of *dramatic poetry*, which, in fact, is the very *business* of an actor, yet the great neglect we have observed, even in this particular, induces us to mention it. It is very true, an actor, in the mere routine of business, will be

be obliged to be much conversant in this knowledge; but how does he acquire it? he takes it up in scraps, and at intervals, when his duty immediately calls him out, which is as soon again forgot; one, therefore, who would wish to take up this part of his profession regularly, should not depend on such *incidental* studies, he should methodically begin with the study of the dramatic classics, such as Shakespeare, Jonson, Beaumont, and Fletcher, together with such others as are upon the stock of acting plays. By the frequent reading of these, he will not only assist his memory, but have a view of all the parts, meaning, and design of each respective author; so that, whenever he is cast for a part, even on the shortest notice, he will possess the general idea of it so strongly, as to make the remaining study of it light and amusing.

In this study, it would be a further assistance both to his memory and imagination, if he would mark, with a pencil, particular emphasis on words, or remarks upon characters, as they should strike him; so floating is the imagination, and unconnected the judgement, that it is not at all times we are capable of exercising either the one, or the other alike; to seize the opportunity then, will be an advantage, which those who trust to their general

neral recollection, will find themselves, for the most part, deprived of.

History holds too principal a rank in this catalogue to be omitted ; on the contrary, it is highly necessary for the actor to know it minutely ; by this branch of knowledge, he will be previously informed of most of the plots of our best dramatic writers, and, from this collateral assistance, be enabled to conceive his author more strongly, a circumstance, we believe, we need not insist of what infinite advantage. The performer, likewise, who would go deep in his profession, should not be content with modern history only, he should have a view of Greek and Roman events, and these not only in the middle, or more ascertained ages, but in the manner their early periods have been transmitted to us, even with all their fables, errors, and falsehoods. He ought to know, for example, all that the antient historians have related of the labours of Hercules, of the expedition of the Argonauts, of the siege of Troy, &c. &c. for though he is at liberty to give what degree of credit he pleases to particular passages, it is necessary for him to know in what manner history relates them ; by this he will have a previous anticipation of all those plays that are founded on historical events, he will enter with more spirit and depth

depth into the character he represents, and by knowing all the little turns and peculiarities of its complexion, mark it with double force and illustration.

Take any of our historic plays, *Henry VIII.* for instance, and let the part of *Henry* be given to two performers of equal merit, in every other respect, but that the one is well acquainted with English history, the other not, and sure it cannot become a question, which of them shall most please a critical audience? the one will have no other clew but the poet, who, though excellent in his art, from being confined to a point of time, could not give such a whole length view of that courageous, splendid, yet lascivious despot; whilst the other, taking in all the parts of his character from the historian, as well as the poet, is not only capable of drawing a stronger outline, but adding those nicer touches which give manner and finish to the picture.

As an appendage to history, it will be necessary to be acquainted with such books as instruct in the antient and modern dresses, as well as religious ceremonies, triumphs, ovations, processions, &c. for though these matters may be thought peculiarly the manager's province, the knowledge of them are of very great

great use to the performer. A man who has no previous idea of a Roman habit, or Roman procession, cannot be easily reconciled to the one, or instructed in the other ; whereas, by knowing their uses from reading, that the one was conformable to the public and domestic exercises ; the other to the emulative and warlike spirit of that people, he will not only find himself more at ease, but feel all the propriety and force of their application.

It may be the case, that a performer may be under a manager totally ignorant of this branch of his profession, which sometimes has happened in capital cities ; very often on summer excursions. This superior information then must stand him in great stead, by having it in his power to accommodate himself in his own performances, as well as holding out his use to the manager, who will be under the necessity of proportionally rewarding qualifications so intimately connected with his own interest.

This knowledge may be collected in going through a course of history ; but the books we would particularly recommend, are “ Strutt’s view of the manners, customs, habits, &c. of the English, Ferrario De Re Vestiaria, Montfaucon, Potter’s Greek, and Kennet’s Roman Antiquities.”

Tho^o

Tho' we have before asserted, that an acquaintance with the *English classics* may be sufficient for conducting a performer through the literary walks of his profession, under this head we beg leave to include, a tolerable knowledge of the *French* language. The state of English education is indeed at present, so modelled (whether for the better, or not, we shall not here enquire into) as, perhaps, might make this requisition unnecessary; a variety of French phrases having crept into our writings and conversations, so as to make it almost impossible to read modern books, or keep modern company, without being acquainted with both languages. 'Tis a player's particular duty, however, to know French as well from its being so constantly interlarded in dramatic works, as the necessity he may be under of filling a French character; for though we have no absolute Frenchman in our drama, who speaks nothing else but his native language, yet we have many whose idiom, inaccuracies and manners must be transplanted into English.

We shall conclude this chapter with recommending the two polite accomplishments of *fencing* and *dancing*, as not only useful to give a polish to general studies, but, in this profession, absolutely necessary. The first of these on the French theatre, does not seem these

altogether so necessary; but on our own, where battles and murders are constantly represented, it must rank as an indispensable part of theatrical education, or (to speak more properly) *theatrical execution*. The introduction of this barbarism we have already decried, but since it is so established that there is scarce an English tragedy, but what has a death before the curtain; surely it is much more decent for a performer to kill, and be killed, *secundum artem*, than jobbed to death after the manner of an assassination?

Another use in fencing, it gives the graceful and unembarrassed use of the sword, as an appendage to dress; and to assist this the more, we would recommend the constant use of it in *private* as well as in *public*: this may seem trifling in theory, but the want of it in practice is readily felt both by the eye and imagination; as it is impossible we can ever form the combination of a gentleman where even so slight a defect of ornament appears.

Dancing is even still more useful than fencing. We do not mean by this that jumble of *freaks*, and *quick steps*, which the vulgar of most countries denominate dancing, but that graceful deportment of the body, in conjunction with the eyes, and muscles of the face, by which a man may express his thoughts independent of the articulation of syllables, and words; this gives a grace to every

every thing an actor says or does upon the stage, and twas this carried, perhaps, to its utmost perfection, which gave rise to an observation lately made on a celebrated French dancer,

“ *That all her steps were sentiments.*”

We would therefore recommend it to every performer not to depend on the early knowledge he might have acquired in this art, and which he might have learned under provincial masters,---but to take particular pains to be instructed by some *capital stage dancer* ; who will pay a greater attention to the deportment and grace of his person, than particular steps. It is not enough, likewise, that he has once learned under such a master, he should keep himself in frequent practice ; nor would it be amiss, to add to it, some of the other agile exercises, such as vaulting, wrestling, &c. The body thus educated (if we may use such an expression) is the more readily fitted to perform all its stage exercises. Whether an actor flies into the arms of his mistress, or kneels at the feet of his sovereign,—whether he makes short angles, or takes long strides,—whether he springs from a throne, or sinks on a bed of state ; all should be performed with grace, and nature.

Such

such speak the silent language of the soul, and in these instances, more than supply the place of words.

Whereas, on the contrary, how often do we see players, otherwise possessed of feeling, and judgement, for the want of being instructed in these particulars, commit the most glaring improprieties ? how often do we see them *measure* the stage in a mechanical long and short step, like the verses of the antiquated, turn their backs upon the audience in walking and speaking---cross each other as if they were jostling on a race-course, or descend the footsteps of a throne, like a common stair-case. In short, perform all the evolutions of the stage so awkwardly, as to dissolve the charm of illusion, and, in spite of the powers of the poet, turn, perhaps, the whole scene into an ill timed but unavoidable ridicule.

C H A P. XXIV.

Continuation of the same Subject.

THESE fundamental instructions being laid down ;—to call them into practice, as well as to recommend others dependent on them, shall be the business of this chapter.

It is an observation of Fresnoy's on painting, which is an art by no means irrelative to acting, that the pupil who would wish to go lengths in his profession, *should do something every day*. We would recommend the same advice to an actor ; for, whether he has a particular part to study or not, this constant exercise will make his profession light to him ; it will enlarge his views, perfect his memory, and what perhaps should be as much attended to as any, keep him from dissipation, that bane of theatrical manners.

In his course of reading, he should be particularly attentive to read *loud*, and *distinct*, and upon no account whatsoever to *bum* over his part, as is the too constant practice. By his keeping his voice thus upon the stretch, he will be enabled to know the whole of its compass,

compass, strengthen its weaknesses, modulate its tones; and, in short, by degrees, bring it under such absolute subjection, as to make his duty on the stage, and in the closet equally easy.

He must attend to the same practice at rehearsals; and further, scarcely abate an article of action, or emphasis there. Every one acquainted with modern rehearsals, must know how loosely, and how much under the par of their abilities the generality of performers go through their parts, and except it is a capital actor, or actress, that has a new one to get studied in, the rest are little better than a *theatrical muster*, who are called together to be in readiness for the night's review, without little more preparation than their bare appearances.

It is a saying almost in every body's mouth on the first night of a new, or revived play, if there should appear any little lapses of memory, or inaccuracies in acting, " That when the performers are more *practised* they will do better."—There is more indulgence than necessary perhaps in this remark,—why not equally, or at least nearly as perfect the first night, as the fourth, fifth, or sixth? did the performers go through the minutiae of their several parts at rehearsal, as before an audience, and repeat them as often as ne-

cessary, the first night would be as much a night of perfection as any other; for to persons much accustomed to the stage, the impression of an audience can make little or no difference. Besides, what makes the blunders of a first night, is not so much the want of memory, as of that *mutual play of action* which is necessary to give grace, and wholeness to the scene. Performers too frequently looking on this as a mere thing of course, neglect it at rehearsals, consequently, when they come before the view of an audience, they go through it with an air of *novelty*, and *embarrassment*, often disagreeable in its consequences to themselves, but much more so to the poet, who, perhaps, has many years labour on the issue.

Being *studied* in one anothers action, and manner, particularly in love scenes, &c. where a more intimate connection is necessary, performers are not only left at liberty to animate each speech as it should be, but to present a picture to the audience, gracefully conformable to all the rules of variety, and relief. We have a capital actor and actress * in our recollection, now on the stage, who abstracted from their other excellencies, play to each others graces so agreeably, that 'tis

equally

* Mr. and Mrs. Barry.

equally difficult, at any time, to surprize them in an inelegant attitude, as it is to arraign their judgement, feeling, or expression.

But to return—after an actor has read sufficiently, it will be necessary to put this reading into practice, by going over some of the principal passages before a large mirror where he can see his whole figure; as was the custom of several of the antient orators. This view of his person will teach him to adopt such expression of features, and accompaniments of action, as are most conformable to his character. It will by degrees, likewise remove, or correct, at least, those little imperfections of nature, and early acquired habits which have nearly the same stubbornness. Demosthenes being in this respect, a standing instance to reproach the *indolent*, as a glorious example to the *industrious*.

In this reflected study of himself, he should take no other actor for his model; however high he might stand on the scale of dramatic excellence, except he, at the same time, *conceives* the part alike; otherwise, the imitation would be as dangerous as a painter copying any of the great masters, without being himself acquainted with the

laws of expression, and muscular motion. In the extremity of the same line, let every species of *mimickry* be avoided ; an art, however, it might tickle the ears of low malice, or now and then force an involuntary approbation from the judicious—is disgraceful to any theatre. It is false in its principles, inhuman in its effects, and fatal to the actor who uses it, as who can be practised in the line of right, who is every hour in the study of other people's defects ?

We shall not here point out, that immense variety of accents of which the voice is susceptible, and which ought to be employed on different occasions, in order to do justice to the vast crowd of sentiments that arise in the course of theatrical studies. We are persuaded, it is impossible to write upon this subject, so as to leave nothing unsaid that may illustrate it, at the same time, such particulars as we may say, wōuld, perhaps, be equally impossible to practise. Nature in forming mankind seldom throws even the most minute parts of two different mēn into the same mould. We find it very rare, that two faces have a strong resemblance of each other, but it, perhaps, never happened, that they could not be distinguished. On the same scale of surprising variety we may observe, that

that the voices of men never exactly resemble one another. How then, can one imagine himself capable to mark out the different turns, and cadences, peculiar to so many men, each of whom has a different voice adapted to his own particular genius, and immediately under its direction ?

Action lies under the same difficulties, and as we have before observed, attempting to give particular rules for it, would be useless as impossible ; an actor has therefore only to possess himself of the enthusiasm of his subject, consult nature, and endeavour to imitate her. In this imitation, however, he should not make too servile a copy, but heighten or depress, in common with painters, such of her works as may be most conducive to his art, and the embellishment of stage effect. In short, if a player shall so *act*, as to persuade us the characters he represents are not *fictitious*, the illusion then becomes complete, all that is *said* is *felt*, and every thing passes for the *truth of action*, and the *language of the soul*.

However, as 'tis necessary for an actor to acquire all the assistances he can from art, compatible with the nature of his profession, we would recommend him to be well studied in some of the most celebrated Greek and Roman statues, *gesses*, busts, &c. which he may

readily have an opportunity of doing, by frequenting the Royal Academy, or the Gallery of his Grace the Duke of Richmond; a nobleman, who has, upon the most liberal plan of patriotism, extended it even to the polish, and refinement of the public taste, and to whom this country is indebted for the foundation of a *School of Statuary**, at a period when the arts were without a royal protector.

Those we would particularly recommend are as follow :

For the Men.

- The two Antinous.
- The Hercules Farnese.
- The Apollo Belvidere.
- The Apollo De Medicis.
- The Caracalla.
- The fighting, and
- Dying Gladiators.

For

* When the Duke of Richmond was on his travels in the year 1755; passing through Florence, he purchased the whole school of Michael Angelo, in Plaster of Paris-Casts, at a very considerable expence, with which, and other antiques, &c. that he brought with him to England; he opened a gallery at his house in Whitehall, for the instruction of young artists, to whom he annually bestows two medals for the best model. This gallery was opened some years, previous to the establishment of the Royal Academy, and continues to be the resort of the curious, who are permitted to see it without any expence whatsoever.

For the Women.

The Venus De Medicis.

The Venus De Calipædia.

Diana.

Flora, and

The Graces.

We have selected the above as some of the most perfect of their kind, in their various expressions. Being, therefore, sufficiently studied in them, so as to adopt their several attitudes with ease, as well as to be acquainted with the justness and truth, of their principles, a performer cannot readily mistake their subordinate combinations. In short, that inflexion of body, and composition of limbs, so as not to encumber each other, or appear divided by sharp, and sudden angles, form the whole of *grace*, and give that *je ne sais quoi*, so much admired in the whole deportment of action.

As 'tis assiduity that, for the most part, conquers a profession, no attention should be wanting in a performer who aspires to excel in that department of acting, his genius and inclination lead him to. On this principle then, it should be his constant care to absent himself as seldom as possible from the theatre, on such nights that he does not perform; but
scarcely

scarcely on any account whatsoever, on those when his *superior* in the same cast of parts, performs. We know how difficult it is to have this phrase allowed, on account of that envy which in general pervades similar departments of profession ; but taking it for granted, that the voice of the town, and the election of the managers, (who we believe every player will allow *know their own interest*) give a just preference to an actor's abilities ; in such a case, it becomes the indispensable duty of an inferior in the same cast, to make strict observations on the voice, attitudes, and judgement of his superior--imitate what he approves of by those standards of judging we have already laid down, and reject what he disapproves of on the same scale. This spirit of emulation then, is the surest method of lowering a rival's perfections---by rising above them ; it is at the same time, generous, manly, and useful,---and serves in infinitely better stead than those *impotent carpings*, and *underhand flanders*, which (tho' the not unusual buz of a green-room) are ever construed by men of understanding, to be no more than the necessary taxes on the other's genius.

The late Mr. Powel, one of the joint Patentees of Covent-Garden theatre, who, whatever

whatever his theatrical defects were, could not be charged with either *dissinclination* or *indistention* to his profession, was very laudably particular in this. We have known him come from Bristol to London, in the very height of the theatrical season, and when he could be very ill spared, to see Mr. Barry perform *King Lear*; his candour in speaking of this celebrated performer afterwards, did him as much honour as his industry, for being asked how he liked him, he answered, "So well, that after having gained his experience, if I can equal him, I shall be content."

We have hitherto but glanced at the benefits arising from a good *memory*, we shall now be a little more particular in speaking of this subject. Tho' this quality is useful in all the liberal, as well as mechanical professions, it perhaps serves a player in more stead than any; for tho' the mere memory does not include every other excellence, 'till this is obtained, there can be no foundation laid for any. He who does not perfectly remember what he has to say, in vain knows *how* he should speak it, and preposterous as 'tis, to suppose a person can play a part because he has it by rote, it is not more so, than to imagine the most eminent

nent player could go through it tolerably who had it not.

We are generally pleased with the acting more than the reading of a play, why? because the illusion is more kept up in the former than the latter, and this illusion is principally supported by the words being remembered perfectly. He who has often played a character, is quite easy as to the words, consequently has *one* principal incumbrance off his mind, his attention then can be carried with double force to his feelings, and deportment; and hence he generally succeeds. In short, the first step towards throwing off a man's self in any character is, the advantage he derives from recollection; --- else he every where feels himself the *player* rather than the *character*, not swelling with the passions of a hero, or melting with the pathos of a lover, but dreading the lapses of his memory.

Could an actor but for a moment on this occasion, transform himself into an auditor, he would see the deception of the scene so much broken in upon, and the glaring absurdity of being *prompted in the passions*, that probably such a view of himself would be the best means of reforming him in this particular,

particular, --- he would then consider memory not only as the storehouse of words, but as the great source from whence he was to draw much of the beautiful, and sublime in his profession, and exclaiming with Churchill,

Would " hate those careless blunders which
recall
Suspended sense, and prove it fiction all."

There is one thing more relative to memory, on which the truth of representation in a great measure depends, and that is the great necessity there is for a performer to remember the *substance* of every other persons part, (particularly those in the same scenes with himself) as well as the *words* of his own. This may seem like laying too heavy a burden on an actor, but the mode we have laid down in the preceding chapter, respecting an intimate and early acquaintance with the *dramatic classics*, will make this labour so light, that a single reading of the play, when a part comes to be studied, in all probability will be sufficient; for he will be a young actor as long as he lives, who follows the young actor's practice of knowing when

when he is to speak; only by the words of his cues.

" I admit the force of this reasoning, says an actor, and very clearly see the advantages of memory, —— but unfortunately for me I have the worst *study* in the world." This is perhaps nine times in ten the *voice of idleness!* we readily grant, there are distinctions in memory; in so much, that what shall be one player's amusement shall be another's drudgery; but this is in a great measure, if not radically, to be cured by frequent exercise. Let the player who has this defect not measure himself by the man who happens to have a good memory, else every surplus hour which he gives up to it--he will be tempted to call a sacrifice, but on the contrary, redouble his diligence to gain an equality. Let him, for instance, bestow such time and attention on the general study of the stage, as are necessary to make him complete master of it. Let him, in those particular parts he is in possession of, lay out a larger portion of his time than others, and give himself tasks proportioned to his gradual improvement. All our faculties grow stronger by exercise, and the memory perhaps more than any. He, therefore, that complains of the want of this, complains

complains only of his want of industry; for though it might lie a little farther out of his reach than another's, let him but exert himself sufficiently, and he acquires it.

C H A P.

C H A P. XXV.

C O N C L U S I O N.

WE have now gone thro' all the principal parts of education which we think necessary for forming an actor, who would look forward to the heights of his profession, and wish to know it upon certain and liberal principles. We cannot close this subject, however, without adding some observations which more immediately respect his private life and conversation.

We are previously aware, how divided the private and public characters of all men, should be on account of the great difficulty of thoroughly knowing the former, as well as its general inapplication when known. With this restriction then before us, we shall only touch upon such parts of the one as influence the other, leaving the rest to that tribunal, where each man's actions should be referred, (except such as come under the cognizance of the magistrate)—his own conscience.

Though the player, in some respect, like an English king, may be thought restrained “*from doing wrong*,” seeing that he is not at liberty to alter, or amend the words of the

poet,

poet; yet the grace and pathos, dignity and deportment with which he conveys them, give them force and meaning. An actor should glow with the same fire that inspires his author, and like a friendly and judicious critic, heighten by the comment of his judgement and feelings, those passages which are written to convey instruction to an audience. But how are these to be attained? not merely by the rules we have already laid down in the preceding chapter; however these may assist, they are not altogether sufficient. How then? why, by first feeling the influence and propriety of *virtue* in his own breast, (without which, he will proportionably want force in communicating it) by mixing with the most polite and intelligent company within his reach, keeping his abilities upon the constant stretch; and, in short, possessing himself of that enthusiasm, which considers nothing arduous, nothing too dearly purchased which redounds to improvement, and the dignity of profession.

The theatre has long been considered, by the generality of the world, (and we fear with too much justice) as being far from the *most perfect school of virtue*. Without descending to particulars, thus much we assert, that the more a performer, by his life and conversation, contributes to support this general character, (ab-

stracted from considering it in a moral sense) the more he lays a clog upon his abilities, and throws an impediment in his pursuits. A dissipated man, has many drawbacks on his talents, he prostitutes his time, blunts his faculties, and impairs his constitution. If these are general barriers, then to success, how much more so to *theatrical fame*? a mistress of that coy and particular temper, who demands a sacrifice to the graces as well as the arts, and who, previous to the surrender of her charms, will scarce abate an article in either.

A good moral character has even other advantages, which, strictly speaking, it has no right to, according to the principles of art; it often secures a performer of very moderate abilities, the countenance, protection, and esteem of the audience. It is in the recollection of all those who have been in the least intimate with the stage, that some who have lately quitted it, either by death, or resignation, and others now on it, are examples of this kind; for such is the powerful force of *virtue*, independent of its particular influence on the mind of the possessor, it raises admirers in every clime; nor has any body of people, perhaps, ever been so absolutely debauched, but what they have paid this compliment to her shrine, except where their particular

ticular interests with-held them. Hear this then, ye sons and daughters of the stage ! and see how necessary it is, even in a *political* light, to extend some regards to *a good private character*. Let not the force of example on the one side, nor the stigmas of ignorance on the other, mislead you ; “a good name in man or woman, is the immediate jewel of their souls :” this gives the profession of a player dignity and respect, whilst the want of it covers a churchman with disgrace.

Though much rests with a performer, in avoiding a life of dissipation, there is one article of *managerial arrangement*, which has, in a great measure, contributed to it ; and that is, *the establishment of benefit nights*. This custom, we believe, originated about the beginning of this century, and was, at first, only meant as a compliment to capital performers, to reward them after the fatigues of the season ; by degrees it grew more general, and probably the managers seeing that, on those nights, there was the particular interest of the player joined to the accidental profits of the night, they adopted it as a standing rule of the theatre, to take the best of the season for themselves, and parcel out the remainder amongst the performers, according to rank, sometimes according to favouritism. The players (particularly those under the first class) being under this predicament, curtailed

in their weekly salaries, and forced to make them up, by endeavouring for good benefits, were obliged to make as universal an acquaintance as they could. In this acquaintance, they were not only led into expences, but into many errors and dissipations. Under the expectation of *annual favours*, 'tis not always that a man otherwise independent properly supports his character, how much less a man, whom the principal existence of himself and family too often depend upon them ; in short, this arrangement opened the door to many bad habits. *Benefit hunting*, became, in time, more attended to than the real duties of the profession ; and the same pains that a performer often took to qualify himself for a *bon vivant*, would have made him an ornament to the stage.

This custom still continues ; but as Shakespeare says, on another occasion, " it is a custom would be more honoured in the *breach* than in the *performance*."

There is another article that rests with the managers, which, if put on its former footing, would, in our opinion, contribute, if not to the morals, at least to the polish and refinement of the theatre ; what we allude to, is permitting a select number of gentlemen behind the scenes. We are aware of the indiscriminate use of this permission,

and

and of the many disturbances and improprieties it has occasionally introduced ; but if a certain number of subscribers were only permitted by rotation, or any number of men of fashion, who would not encumber the business of the scenes, we are positive some such regulation would have peculiar benefits.

Formerly, when this indulgence was sparingly used, it had a good effect, as many performers, who probably had few other opportunities of mingling with men of fashion, and observing on their *manners* and *deportment*, caught that habitual ease and breeding which theory can never alone inculcate ; this intercourse very often extended beyond the Green Room ; and those players, who had it in their power to recommend themselves by their private behaviour, formed many valuable and useful acquaintances.

For though the quickness of familiar conversation will not admit of an attention to that accuracy which is required in study, yet there are in those intercourses, a certain superior spirit, and genuine eloquence, which, perhaps, are a better help to the improvement of style, and a more enlivening model for imitation, than the united efforts of the closet. Those happy turns, and emphatical sprightly phrases, which are struck out by the collision of animated conversation, and that

that graceful dignity of manner which are peculiar to those who move in the higher spheres of life, will catch the attention of him who is familiarly accustomed to them, and insensibly become his own ; for, as our senses naturally retain the print of images commonly presented to them, so our language and behaviour, almost unavoidably, take a tincture from those with whom we usually converse.

To this Wilkes, the celebrated comedian, (that first rate model of his time for theatrical elegance and breeding) was principally indebted ; for as no player, perhaps, ever lived more amongst gentlemen of the first rank, so no man was ever less the player on the stage. To the many testimonies left us of this, we shall add that of a gentleman lately dead, who has ever been considered by his acquaintance, no less a critic in the *bon-ton* than the world of letters ; from this gentleman, we were informed, that whatever Wilkes did on the stage, let it be never so trifling, whether it consisted in putting on his gloves, or taking out his watch, lolling on his cane, or taking snuff, every thing was marked with such an ease of breeding and manner ; every thing told so strongly the involuntary motion of a gentleman, that it was impossible to consider the cha-

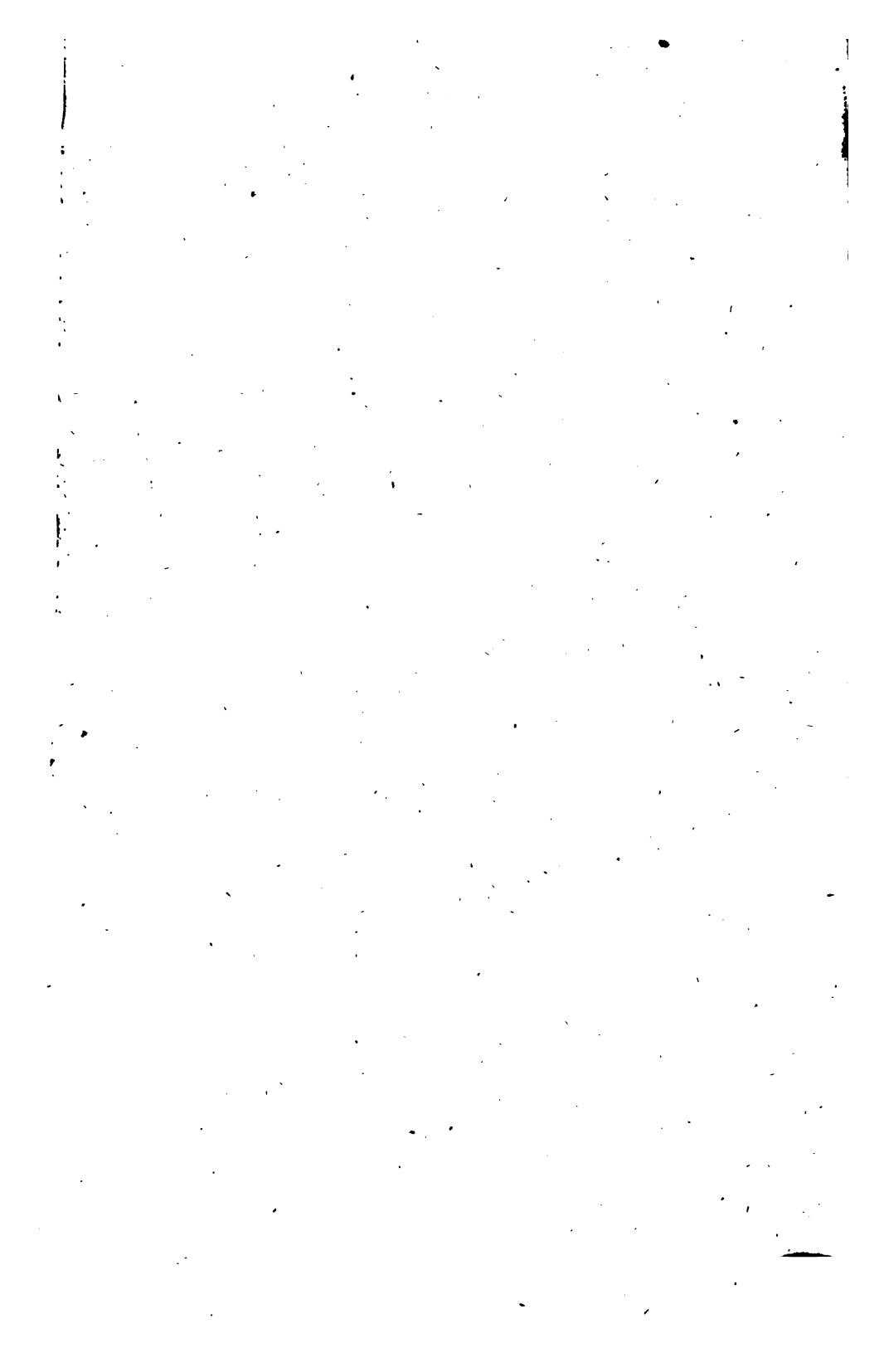
character he represented in any other light than that of a reality.

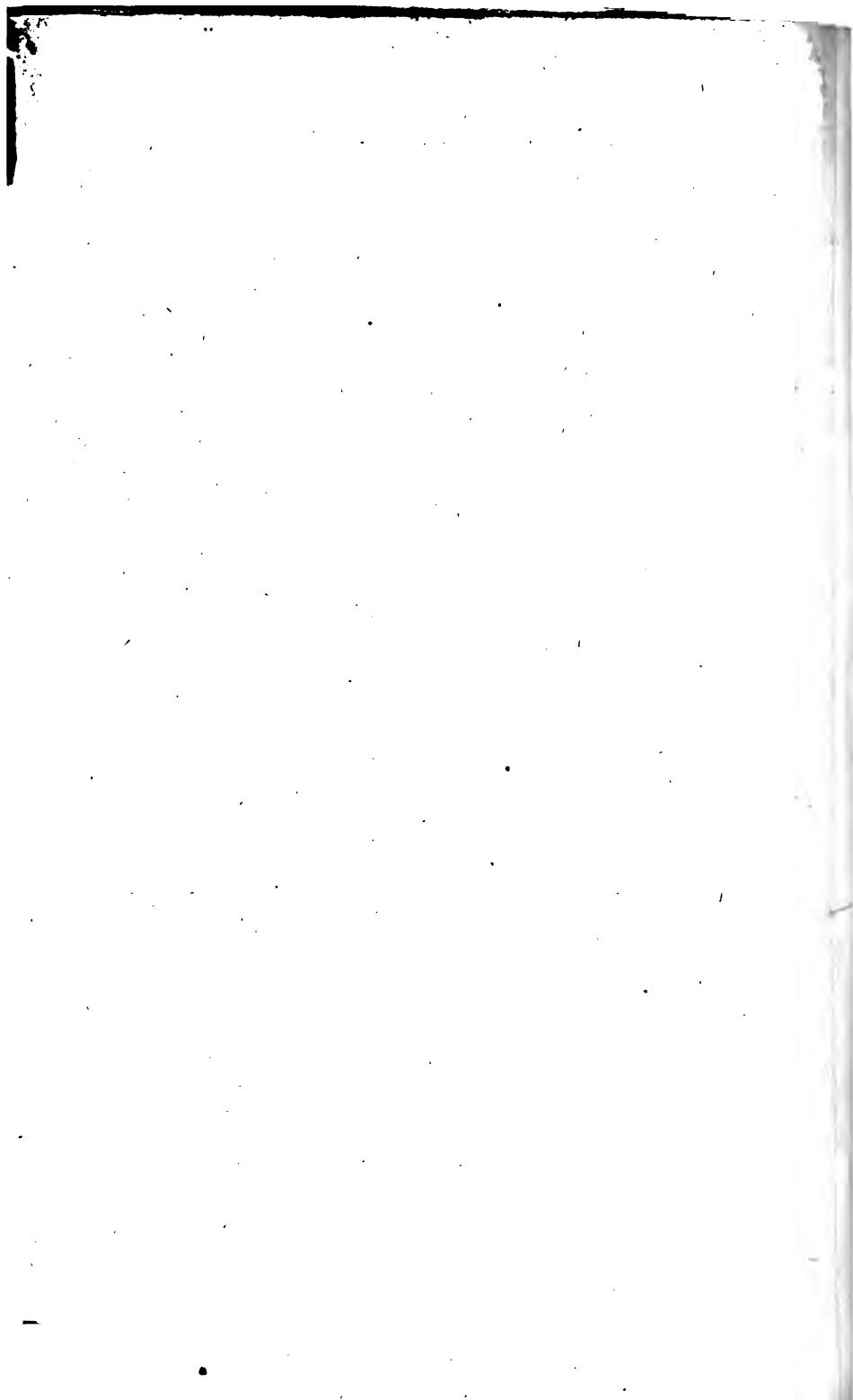
It may now, perhaps, be thought, that in these instructions, we have descended into too many minute particulars; but it must be remembered, that 'tis by a combination of these, perfection is to be acquired; for so various and *petite* are the qualifications of an actor, that the smallest omission, in some respect, deranges the business of the most impaffioned scenes; whereas, on the contrary, it is by a minute and universal knowledge of any profession, names are lifted into notice, and bear the stamp of excellence: it was the consciousness of this made Michael Angelo exclaim, (upon one of his pupils wondering how a few touches he had given a statue of his, could make so surprising a change) " however slight these touches may appear, such make the difference between you and Michael Angelo."

We have now reached the limits of this treatise, in which, willing as we were to be as diffuse as possible, we are sensible of omitting many other minutiae of theatrical education; not that they have escaped us, but on account of the difficulty, indeed the impossibility of committing them singly, and

and with a precision capable of being followed on paper. In these instances, Shakespeare gives the rule; "Let your own discretion be your tutor;" and the player, who wants this for his guide, will look for advice in vain on the most crowded scale of written instructions.

F I N I S.







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